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LECTURES

ON

MODERN

SOCINIANISM,

DELIVERED IN

DUKE'S ALLEY CHAPEL,

Bolton,

BY JOSEPH FOX.

LONDON :

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1824.

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TO THE
FRIENDS OF EVANGELICAL TRUTH

IN GENERAL,

AND TO

HIS OWN CONGREGATION

IN PARTICULAR,

TO THE LATTER OF WHOM, WITH MANY OF THE FORMER

IN BOLTON AND ITS NEIGHBOURHOOD

THESE LECTURES

WERE ORIGINALLY DELIVERED,

THEY ARE NOW RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

BY THE

AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE Author of this volume deems it unnecessary to offer any apology for presenting it to the Public. If, in connection with the local circumstances from which they have originated, the following Lectures be calculated to serve the cause of Divine Truth, their publication was a duty which the Lecturer owed to the community, and apology could be viewed in no other light than that of mere affectation. If, on the contrary, they have no tendency, under the blessing of God, to advance the interests of religion, an apology could not make them worthy of public patronage.

As, however, the circulation of the volume may possibly extend further than Bolton and the neighbourhood, where the occasion of it is well known, the reason of its appearance may be briefly stated. An intrepid champion of Socinianism having lately come to Bolton, delivered on Sabbath evenings in the winter of 1822, a course of Lectures, in which he combated, with no ordinary freedom and boldness, what are commonly called, orthodox sentiments. Various reasons combined on those occasions to attract crowded audiences. Unitarians, as they call themselves, boasted of converts being made to their tenets by hundreds; and, assuming an air of triumph, represented orthodoxy as a rapidly declining cause—the timid but sincere friends of truth in the meantime looking on, some of them at least, with considerable anxiety. The Writer of the following pages indeed felt no alarm as to the result. He could not however be entirely an unconcerned spectator; and it was in this state of things, that though he at first thought it best to decline noticing such an extraordinary effort of zeal, yet he afterwards considered it as perhaps his duty to undertake the defence of Trinitarian principles. If, in executing

this task, he has assumed the attitude of an assailant, it is not because he does not think that, in general, to preach the truth is the most eligible way of refuting error, but because the peculiarity of his circumstances seemed to justify his adoption of a different course.

Some individuals, with whom the Author of this publication has the honour and happiness to be united in judgment on every point in religion of essential moment, say, "Let the Socinians alone: if you meddle with them you will only bring them more into notice, and make them appear of more consequence than they otherwise would." This advice would be entitled to more consideration, if all were as well established in the belief of sacred truth as the persons are who offer it. But though the Author has no idea that Socinianism will ever do essential harm except to those who voluntarily resign themselves to delusion, yet he is persuaded, that were no antidote applied, its poison might be productive of pernicious consequences in ensnaring the ignorant, beguiling the unsuspecting, unhinging the young inquirer after truth, and perplexing with painful scruples the mind of the sincere believer.

When thousands are lamentably deficient in information on Divine subjects, and consequently unfortified against the attacks of error ; when numbers, from not being better established in knowledge and grace, are easily shaken in their Christian principles; and when many are as yet only forming their religious opinions; surely the ground ought not to be left solely to diligent and zealous propagators of the most dangerous sentiments. Besides, when Providence permits the truth of God to be openly and audaciously misrepresented, assailed, perverted, and denied, is it not a call on the friends of that truth, and especially its ministers, to defend it according to their ability and as opportunities are presented?

It may, perhaps, be unreasonable to imagine, that this publication will be suffered to pass unnoticed by the abettors of that system which it is an attempt to refute and expose. The Author, therefore, takes this opportunity of stating, that attention on his part to any animadversions on the work in general, or particular parts of it, will depend entirely on the character which they may bear. This declaration is thought expedient, because to the

petty attacks of Socinianism, made through the medium of Monthly Reviews and Repositories, or less public strictures, in which metaphysical questions and artful evasions are easily multiplied, but which afford little room for argument or discussion, there is no end. The man who should encounter them, must enter a labyrinth at once inextricable and interminable.

It is by no means supposed that there exists among Socinian Unitarians,* any more than among other religious bodies, an entire unanimity of sentiment on all points in theology, or that every principle and practice mentioned in this volume, as characterizing this class of religionists, is chargeable on the whole of their number without exception. Yet, unless the Author be much mistaken, there is not in this work a single opinion attributed to the system, but what is entertained and industriously propagated by individuals who are received and acknowledged as approved, and, in some instances, distinguished members of the denomination.

* As every Christian, Mahometan, and Jew is a Unitarian, Dr. Wardlaw seems to have stretched his liberality too far, in conceding to Socinians *exclusively*, the title, "Unitarians," without any restriction or qualification.—See reply to Mr. Yates, Page 18.

If the work contain any expressions inconsistent with due respect to the persons of those whose opinions he has examined, the Lecturer begs that they may be imputed not to design, but wholly to the excitement of discussion. He has practised no reserve in expressing himself; but if he have inconsiderately or rashly given publicity to any thing unjustifiable, he would be the first to wish the unhallowed declamation expunged from his pages.

In the composition of these Lectures imperfections will be discovered; but to mitigate critical severity, the Writer may be permitted to say, that had the ever-recurring engagements inseparable from the public and social duties of the pastoral office allowed him time, he would freely have devoted it to make them more worthy of public attention. It may not be improper in this place to state also, that as candid and enlightened criticism has always appeared to him an obligation conferred on an Author, rather than a freedom to be deprecated, he would gladly avail himself of any suggestion from whatever quarter it might come, tending either to correct what is erroneous or supply what is deficient.

In the Scriptures which are adduced, there is occasionally a reference to passages which had been previously quoted. This circumstance it was found difficult wholly to avoid, especially as the same passage is often of importance for supporting distinct points of argument. The Author, however, is not aware that any text is quoted a second time to illustrate or establish the same principle.

The first Lecture is considered chiefly as introductory. The ninth and tenth are subjoined, because of their affinity with the general series; and if the preceding Lectures should be in some degree irksome to the pious reader on account of their controversial character, these, it is hoped, especially the tenth, he will find more congenial to a devotional taste. Local considerations perhaps make it proper further to state, that none of the seven Lectures at first delivered and bearing more directly on Socinianism, are omitted. The seventh, which was originally the sixth, has received another title and introduction; and that entitled "The devotions of Socinianism not Christian Worship," which was composed and delivered subsequently, is added to make the original course more complete.

If any reader, unacquainted as yet with productions in this department of polemic theology, would see a critical examination of perhaps every text of Scripture, a consideration of which the controversy involves, with many acute and luminous exposures of the false glosses and baneful sophistry to which, in conducting the controversy, Socinian writers have recourse, he may consult the very able volumes of Drs. Magee, Wardlaw, and Smith, and that of the Rev. Edward Nares, A. M. on the Unitarian Version of the New Testament. If, also, he be desirous of perusing an extended and masterly examination of the moral tendency of Socinianism, he may be referred to the late Rev. A. Fuller's Calvinistic and Socinian systems compared, where he will find a rich fund of good sense, sound reasoning, and pious sentiments.

If these pages should be the means of preserving from Socinianism even a single individual, the Writer would consider himself more than amply compensated, and would make his grateful acknowledgments to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, the triune Jehovah, for condescending so far to honour his instrumentality.

Bolton, February 2nd, 1824.

LECTURE I.



A VIEW OF SOCINIANISM.



1 THESS. v. 21, “*Prove all things.*”

My appearance before you, my friends, on this occasion, is with no other than a kind, and, I trust, Christian feeling towards every man. It is not for the sake of opposition, but to warn you, as God shall help me, of what I conceive to be most pernicious errors. If, on mature deliberation, I could have thought it consistent with duty in present circumstances to say nothing on the subject before us, silence would have been much more congenial to my own mind, as controversy is far from being my delight.

I am, however an advocate for the right of free inquiry and public discussion, even on religious topics, when conducted on Scriptural principles. Not truth, but error alone will eventually suffer from a full and unrestricted exercise of this inestimable privilege. Matters of conscience, brethren, are sacred. They are above human jurisdiction. All have an inalienable right explicitly to avow, and to the utmost of their ability, to defend the sentiments which they have conscientiously adopted. What in this respect I claim for myself,

belongs in an equal degree to others. It is the birth-right of every man. Nor would I, even if it were in my power, put in the way of any, the smallest impediment to its exercise. Devoutly do I wish, that neither in this country nor in any other, either by civil or ecclesiastical authority, a single effort might ever be made to suppress error or disseminate truth, except by the only legitimate weapons of Scripture—persuasion and argument. These alone can convince the mind and influence the conscience. Proscriptions, prisons, racks, faggots, and fires, may make men hypocrites or infidels; but they will never make one convert to sound conviction or rational assent.

“Let Cæsar’s dues be ever paid

“To Cæsar and his throne :

“But consciences and souls were made

“To be the Lord’s alone.” *

The truth of God contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is a heavenly and glorious communication. Next to Christ himself, it is the richest boon ever bestowed on fallen man. It imparts to us, a knowledge of the Being of God ; of his nature and perfections; and of his existence in three distinct persons : the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in one undivided essence. It reveals to us the will of God concerning our duty to him, to ourselves, and to each

* Watts.

other; giving us his holy law as the invariable standard of human conduct. It describes to us the nature of sin, as consisting in the violation of the divine law; and points out to us the awful desert of transgression, which, according to its declarations, is the wrath of God for ever; or in other words, temporal, spiritual, and eternal death. "The wages of sin," says Scripture, "is death." This sacred guide, teaches clearly the defection of all mankind from God, in connection with the original disobedience of our first parents. It strongly delineates our moral depravity, and shews us all to be by nature, guilty, polluted, unworthy, and without spiritual strength. The sacred records then introduce us to the way of salvation. Salvation, they teach, to be by the free favour of God alone, through the death of Christ, as a satisfaction for sin; and they represent it as consisting in the pardon of sin, and acceptance with God, through faith in the Redeemer's blood, in regeneration by the Holy Spirit, together with perfect sanctification, and eternal life in heaven. The foregoing, all-interesting information, is accompanied with faithful warnings of the eternal misery that awaits those, who do not repent and believe the truth; and many earnest exhortations to mankind, in different forms of expression, not to neglect the great salvation which the gospel exhibits.

The honour of God, is deeply concerned, in the regard which his rational creatures pay to his truth, and in its success among men. And the vital interests of human

happiness, are most closely interwoven with the knowledge and cordial reception of it. Where this truth is clearly understood, *there* God is known in a manner superior to that, in which his name can be learned through any other medium, and his character appears most glorious. In the gospel we see the glory of all the divine perfections, shining forth in the adorable person and mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. Where the truth of God is received in love, sin loses its power over the mind ; satan is dethroned in the soul ; the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, is restored ; the kingdom of God is set up in the heart ; the subject of this change becomes a servant of righteousness ; and he is meet for the world of glory. We need not wonder, therefore, that the truth as it is in Jesus, has always met with opposition from Satan, the grand foe of God and man ; and from all who are engaged in his interest, whether men or infernal spirits. The word of God itself predicted, in early ages, that opposition would be raised against the truth. All the hostility, which the pure gospel of Christ has encountered in successive periods of time, has been one continued fulfilment of Scripture itself, on this point. There are two ways, chiefly, in which Satan and his instruments have set themselves against the truth, and attempted to extirpate it from the earth,—persecution and false doctrine. Persecution has imprisoned the faithful followers of Christ, despoiled them of their comforts, and in numberless instances has destroyed their

lives. False doctrine has either openly denied, or insidiously undermined, the leading and essential articles of the Christian faith. Multiform are the heresies, which, from the days of the apostles to the present time, have distracted the Christian church. To enumerate one half of them, would to me be impossible, and even if it were in my power to give the detail, would be tedious. Suffice it to say, that error has assumed ten thousand shapes, and the gospel has been assaulted from every quarter, on every side, at every point. But never, perhaps, was there a more bold and general attack on the vital interests of the gospel, than is made by the principles and doctrines of Socinianism, and especially, modern Socinianism.

“The Socinians derive their name from Faustus Socinus, who died in Poland in the year, 1604. He maintained that Jesus Christ was a mere man ; that he had no existence before he was conceived by the Virgin Mary ; that the Holy Ghost is no distinct person ; but that the Father only is truly and properly God. He owned that the name of God is given to Jesus Christ in the Holy Scriptures ; but contended, that it is only a deputed title, which, however, invests him with a great authority over all created beings. He denied the doctrines of satisfaction for sin and imputed righteousness, and said that Christ only preached the truth to mankind, set before them in himself, an example of heroic virtue, and sealed his doctrine with his blood. Original sin and predestination he esteemed scholastic chimeras.”

He maintained also, as it would seem, the sleep of the soul at death, at least this is the opinion of many of his followers, who say, that 'the soul at death becomes insensible, and is raised again with the body at the resurrection, when the good shall be established in the possession of eternal felicity, while the wicked shall be consigned to a fire that will not torment them eternally, but for a certain duration proportioned to their demerits.'"*

There is, however, some difference between primitive Socinians, and those of the present age. Socinus and his immediate followers admitted the fact of Christ's miraculous conception and worshipped him as exalted after his resurrection to the government of the world; while the Socinians of the present day deny the former, and utterly abstain from the latter. In these points, the main, if not the only, difference between the ancient and modern Socinians consists. It is therefore, a difference circumstantial, rather than essential. The former, though they denied that Christ was truly God, yet engaged in his worship, which practice, after such denial, was palpably absurd. But the latter, consistent in practice with the principle common to both, disbelieving our Saviour's Godhead, refuse to pay him adoration.

But the Socinians of the present day reject this name, esteem it a term of reproach, and are much offended with its application. I can, however, assure you, that in using it, I have no wish to offend, nor the

* Buck's Theological Dictionary.

slightest intention to reproach them. God forbid that I should at any time ascend the pulpit, to reproach any man or any class of men. I use the name Socinian, because I know no other term so proper to be applied to the persons in question, as a distinctive title. I know that they do not adopt implicitly the opinions of Socinus, nor do we those of Calvin or of any other man, nor do the Arminians (as far as I know) those of Arminius. Yet, as the last-mentioned denomination embrace in the main, the theological sentiments of Arminius, and as we ourselves hold in general the doctrinal tenets which Calvin maintained, it is generally allowed proper for the purpose of distinction, to designate each class accordingly. On the same principle then, they who maintain substantially the same opinions with those which Socinus held, are properly called Socinians. It is matter of regret to the sincere friends of Christ, separated as they are by a diversity of sentiments, that titles borrowed from men, however celebrated, should be employed to designate the followers of our Lord Jesus. But in the present state of the religious world, the practice seems necessary, for the purpose of distinguishing different denominations and their respective creeds. Unless we could see eye to eye in religion, the practice is, perhaps, indispensable. Though it would be much more agreeable to the spirit and genius of the new Testament, if the disciples of the Redeemer were called after none but Christ and God.

The Socinians have appropriated to themselves the

name "Unitarian." But I think we have a right to protest against their conduct in this appropriation, as disingenuous. What is a Unitarian? A Unitarian is one who believes the doctrine of the divine Unity, and who practices the worship of one God, in contradistinction to Polytheists and Idolaters. Then Churchmen, and Dissenters of every name are Unitarians. The doctrine of the Unity of God, is the leading article of all their theological systems; and they all worship one God, even Jehovah. Is it then proper, is it fair for one body of people to appropriate to themselves, distinctively and exclusively, an appellation that is common to many? I leave you to give the answer.

But, I apprehend, several reasons may be assigned for Socinians being so partial to this name.

1. When limited to its strict and proper import, it keeps out of sight all their obnoxious sentiments. Unitarianism is orthodox Christianity. It is the religion of the Bible. It is the doctrine and worship of one God. It has been equally dear to Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs, and the Church of God in every age. This, we think, cannot be said of Socinianism.

2. It is a name which admits of great latitude of application, and which may therefore safely be used in reference to men who would tremble at the thought of entertaining Socinian sentiments, which sentiments are however in general the theological opinions adopted by that body who appropriate to themselves this title.

The Socinians of the present day, calling themselves

“Unitarians,” tell us that Dr. Watts died a Unitarian. If they mean by the term in this application, that Dr. Watts died a firm believer in the doctrine of the Unity of God, they are right. Or if they mean that he was to the end of life a sincere and impartial inquirer after truth, they are no less correct. He was indeed in life and death willing to follow truth whithersoever it might lead him. If the meaning is, that he died a rational Christian, neither is that disputed, but most readily conceded. He had no sentiments in theology which in his estimation were not consistent with reason; though he believed many doctrines of Divine Revelation, with the knowledge of which unassisted reason could never have furnished him. But if, by the declaration that Dr. Watts died a Unitarian, is meant, that he was at death an unbeliever in the essential Deity of Christ, in the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, in the fall and depravity of man, in satisfaction for sin by the blood of Christ, in regeneration by the Holy Ghost, and other doctrines necessarily connected with these capital articles of the Christian faith, then let it be proved to the world. Let it be proved by any thing that Dr. Watts wrote or said, either previous to, or at, his death. The Doctor’s solemn address which he left unpublished, shews him to have been towards the close of life, in some degree confused and unsettled in his thoughts concerning the Trinity from an over anxiety, as it appears to me, to comprehend the doctrine. But that he ever renounced any of the essential doctrines of the gospel, is, I believe, without the shadow of evidence

or support from any testimony in existence. If Unitarianism be charged upon Dr. Watts with an intention to convey any such meaning, it is as foul and base a calumny as can well be uttered, attended with the aggravating circumstance, that it is a calumny not on the living who might vindicate himself, but on the pious, defenceless dead. In the short memoir of the Doctor which is prefixed to the Leeds edition of his works, published by the late Rev. Dr. Williams, of Rotherham, and the Rev. Edward Parsons, of Leeds, there is, in the account which they give of his death, the following statement. "He discoursed *much* of his dependance upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ, and his trust in God through the Mediator, remained unshaken to the last."

3. Is there not another reason why the Socinians have such a partiality for this designation,—its insinuating, in its exclusive application to them, that others bearing the Christian name are not Unitarians, or in other words, that the whole of Christendom, themselves only excepted, have rejected from their systems the belief that there is only one God, and in their devotions have become Polytheists and worshippers of idols or false gods? I submit this query to your consideration, only asking, whether such an insinuation does not come with a bad grace from those who pride themselves on their candour and liberality, qualities, however, in which, according to their shewing, Trinitarians are in general greatly deficient?

I now proceed to exhibit to you a further view of

Socinianism, in a number of particulars, each of which I entreat you to consider candidly and impartially.

1. Socinianism puts human reason in matters of religion in the place of Divine Revelation. This is one of the grand sources of all the other errors which the Socinian scheme comprehends. The Rev. John Grundy, of Manchester, in a sermon which he published some years ago, and which is entitled "Christianity an Intellectual and Individual Religion," has the following passage:—"For what purpose was reason given? Precisely that it might be the rule of life, the helm by which we might steer our course across the tempestuous billows of mortality, the touchstone of every doctrine, the supreme umpire in every difficulty and doubt." Is not this *advancing* reason to occupy the place which the Word of God alone should hold? According to these positions, reason is the mistress, Revelation is only the handmaid; reason is the judge, Revelation must be tried at her bar; reason is the balance in which Revelation must be weighed. And of what essential avail can Revelation be to us when our own reason is to sit in judgment on what it teaches, and to be the arbiter which must determine whether we shall receive its doctrines or not?

But what has reason done for this denomination who promote her to such extraordinary honour? I will reply to this question by laying before you a short extract from Freeston's answer to the inquiry "Why are you not a Socinian?" A note at the bottom of the sixth page of that Publication says, "Modern Socinians have proceeded

so far in purging Christianity from error and reducing it to the standard of reason, that one of them rejects three out of the four Gospels as fabulous; another despises prayer as nugatory; a third brands public worship with the name of hypocrisy; a fourth opposes the morality of the Sabbath, and even recommends without a blush the pious pleasures of the playhouse on a Sunday; and at length a disciple of the same school, denies the resurrection and general judgment, which the other had pronounced the only discoveries of rational Christianity!!! "Is it difficult after this," asks the Author, "to anticipate whither reason will lead them at last?"

2. Socinianism takes unwarrantable liberties with the Holy Scriptures. Its votaries reject from the Bible as unauthentic, not only single verses, but chapters; and pay no higher regard to the apostolic writings than to many compositions that are uninspired. One Author among them has written a book to prove that only one of the gospels is genuine. Another, celebrated for his great erudition, treats both the miracles recorded in the Pentateuch, and the character of Moses as there exhibited, with contempt. * Many parts of the Bible they pronounce to be interpolations, and much of the common version they say is mistranslated. Though a host of the confessedly wisest, best, and most learned men who have lived since this version was made, have agreed in testifying, that the improvements in translation

* Freeston, p. 39.

of which it is capable, are in no place such as materially, if at all, to affect any essential doctrine of our common Christianity. If you adopt the opinions, and cherish the feelings of this body of people in reference to the Bible, you will scarcely know what to believe and what to reject. You will be involved in great perplexity on this important head, if you be not induced to abandon the whole of sacred Writ. But what shall we think of a religious system which leads men thus to regard the volume of inspiration ; thus to trifle with the word of God, the authenticity and genuineness of the various parts of which, have been proved and established by the profoundest scholarship, the most critical acumen, the most diligent and accurate research, the most patient and persevering investigation, the most enlightened and ardent piety? Does not a system which makes such treatment of the Scriptures in any degree necessary, carry its own condemnation on the face of it?

3. Socinianism opposes its assumptions and doctrines to plain matter of fact and universal experience. It denies the original sinfulness of our nature. I say nothing here of the evident contrariety of this negation to the positive asseverations of Scripture, as that will require our attention in another place. But I do say, that by what we see and hear of human nature every day, and by what we read of it in the history of the world and the records of the church, this part of Socinianism is completely contradicted and disproved. If human nature in its original constitution be not depraved,

how comes it to pass that children who have done no actual sin suffer so much affliction and pain? How does it happen that children die in infancy, and thus sustain the penalty which according to the Scripture, sin alone can incur? How is it that sin is an inseparable adjunct of our species in every possible variety of character, in every diversity of circumstances, in every age, in every clime? Let the Socinians, if they can, return a satisfactory answer to these queries, on their hypothesis, that our nature in infancy is wholly pure. This, however, I think we may safely pronounce to be impossible. Matters of fact and Socinian theology are at variance. The advocates of the latter, seem to have no mode of extricating themselves from the difficulties in which their principles here involve them, but by explaining away the nature of sin, and maintaining that there is not so much evil in the world as general representation, on our part especially, would lead us to conclude. But in what we advance on this humiliating subject, are we not fully borne out by the Word of God? Is it possible that we should use stronger and more affecting language on the sinful state of human nature, than the Bible employs?

4. Socinianism undermines the essential principles of the moral government of Jehovah. I allude here to the position maintained by Socinians, in effect at least, and which their system necessarily involves, that God can pardon sin without an adequate satisfaction to his

justice. Pardon sin without satisfaction to his justice ! Then the mercy of God is every thing in the administration of heaven, while his justice is nothing. Pardon sin without satisfaction to his justice ! what then becomes of his holiness ? what becomes of his truth ? what becomes of the honour of his law ? According to this hypothesis, all these are mere nonentities. On this principle of administration, his holiness and truth, and the honour of his law are altogether disregarded. But they never can be disregarded till they have ceased to be. This assumption thus traced to its consequences, goes to un-deify the great Eternal. If this principle be admitted, then the essential difference of good and evil is a wild chimera ; the eternal principles considered as distinguishing right and wrong are at an end for ever ; the moral government of God is all a farce ; sin has triumphed over righteousness, and eternal anarchy has invaded the universe. How much more consistent, cheering, and delightful is the Scripture representation of the ground of divine forgiveness, in which we learn, that justification is **“freely by grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. To declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.”*

* Rom. iii. 24—26.

Here is a scheme in which justice receives all its honours, and yet mercy is shewn to every penitent ; in which, as the Psalmist so beautifully expresses it, “ Mercy and truth have met together : righteousness and peace have embraced each other.”*

5. Socinianism speaks in awfully debasing terms of the person, character, and work of the divine Redeemer. It says, that Christ was a mere man, and only a man ; that he is the proper son of Joseph ; that he never existed in any other respect than as a man. Its abettors declare, that Christ was fallible and peccable. The notion that his death was a propitiatory sacrifice for sin, they totally reject ; and the doctrine of redemption through his blood, they hold to be an entire mistake. They allow indeed, that Christ is now alive, and employed in offices the most honourable and benevolent ; that he is the chief of Prophets, the Messiah, the Son of God. But Mr. Belsham maintains that “ we are totally ignorant of the place where he resides, and of the occupations in which he is engaged ; and, consequently, that there can be no proper foundation for religious addresses to him, or of gratitude for favours now received, or of confidence in his future interposition on our behalf.”† But how different from this strain is the manner in which the sacred Writers speak of the Redeemer ! David pronounces

* Psal. lxxxv. 10.

† Dr. Magee’s Discourse on Atonement and Sacrifice.

him, "fairer than the children of men;" Isaiah calls him, "the mighty God;" Jeremiah, "the Lord our righteousness;" Ezekiel, "the Plant of renown;" Daniel, "the Messiah, who was to be cut off, but not for himself, who was to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity;" Micah, "the Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting;" Haggai, "the Desire of all nations;" Zachariah, "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness to the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the man that is Jehovah's fellow;" and Malachi, "the Lord who should suddenly come to his temple, the Messenger of the Covenant, the Sun of Righteousness." Peter styles him, "a Prince and a Saviour, exalted to the right hand of God to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins," asserting that "there is salvation in no other." Paul terms him, "God over all, blessed for ever," and says, that he was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners;" John denominates him, "the true God and eternal life," and declares of his blood, that it "cleanseth from all sin."* Is it not then a thing most wonderful, that Socinian writers and preachers should pretend to take their religion from the Bible?

* Psal. xlv. 2.—Isaiah ix. 6.—Jer. xxiii. 6.—Ezekiel xxxiv. 29.—Daniel ix. 26.—Micah v. 2.—Haggai ii. 7.—Zech. xii. 1.—Malachi iii. 1.—Acts v. 31.—Acts iv. 12.—Rom. ix. 5.—Heb. vii. 26.—I John v. 20.—i. 7.

6. Socinianism flatters men with vain and presumptuous hopes, by holding out to those who are in a course of transgression, expectations of future happiness that will never be realized. It tells men, that though they should go to hell, they will not be punished for ever, but only for a time. This is just the doctrine which men wish for, who are not, on the one hand, confirmed Atheists, nor on the other, willing to forsake sin. But how horrible must that doctrine be which has the slightest tendency to make a man comfortable in his evil ways! It is unspeakably more to be dreaded than the pestilence or the assassin.

7. Socinianism is not the religion of Heaven. "And I beheld," says John,* "and lo! in the midst of the throne, and of the four living ones, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living ones and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and

* Rev. v. 6—12.

tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made us unto our God, kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living ones, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." In what light does Socinianism appear when compared with this representation of the religion of glorified spirits?

Lastly. This system of doctrine may suit the curious and speculative in religion, the proud, the carnal, and the worldly; but it is wholly unadapted to the feelings and necessities of a truly convinced sinner, and a humble, teachable, contrite believer. There is nothing here to encourage the man who, on his approach to God, sees that the Lord is just as well as merciful, and that, therefore, he cannot stand before the Almighty on the foundation of his own obedience, since he has nothing to plead but guilt and unworthiness. There is no Divine Mediator here, no Advocate with the Father, to plead his own propitiation on our behalf, no Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, no peace speaking blood, no justifying righteousness, no regenerating Spirit to renew the mind, no solid comfort; in a word, no salvation for those who see themselves ruined by sin. No—for

it is Christ alone, in his adorable person, his finished work, his gracious offices, his inexhaustible fulness, who can meet their wants, satisfy their desires, remove their anxieties, and secure and perpetuate their happiness. But in the Socinian scheme, Christ in all these respects is rejected.

Now, my friends, let me exhort you to consider well what has been said. If any thing which has been advanced be incorrect and untrue, I would gladly be made sensible of my mistake. On conviction, I will cheerfully retract my error. I respect the Socinians as men, and regard many of them as possessing learning, talents, and other excellent qualities; not a few as entitled to high consideration in civil society. But with the Bible in my hand, I cannot consider their theological tenets in any other light, than as fatally dangerous. However, I should be most sorry to misrepresent them. Let us search the Scriptures in the spirit and practice of prayer, and we shall find that they "are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith that is in Christ Jesus."* May the Holy Spirit lead us into all divine truth. To God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be honour and praise everlasting.—AMEN.

* 2. Tim. iii. 15

LECTURE III.



SOCINIANISM DIAMETRICALLY OPPOSED TO NEARLY
ALL THE ESSENTIAL DOCTRINES OF THE BIBLE.

ISAIAH viii. 20th,
“To the law and to the testimony.”

“**T**HE Bible and the Bible alone” says Chillingworth, “is the religion of Protestants.” This noble maxim is every way worthy of its justly celebrated author. May I, this evening, be allowed to adopt it with some little variation, in application to the subject before me, and say, “The Bible and the Bible alone” is the legitimate basis of pure and unadulterated Christianity? In the title of this evening’s Lecture, you will, on a moment’s reflection, perceive that it is taken for granted that you acknowledge the Bible as our only sufficient, our supreme and ultimate authority in every religious investigation. Had not this point been assumed, the present discussion ought to have been preceded by another on Revelation, the only safe

and infallible guide in all matters of sacred inquiry. But I persume, I was right in concluding that, on your part, this was uncalled for. I trust that the great majority of you have firm confidence in the entire sufficiency of Scripture, as a divinely accredited guide in religion ; and that, in judgment at least, you bow in deference to its exclusive authority.

You are convinced that your religious sentiments ought to be formed on the Scripture model ; and that every opinion in theology which you have adopted or may embrace hereafter, ought to stand or fall as it is supported or disproved by the Word of God. This important particular being conceded and mutually understood, I shall proceed immediately to our main object, on the present occasion,—namely—to show that “Socinianism is diametrically opposed to nearly all the essential doctrines of the Bible.”

In the *First* place, What account of God does the Socinian scheme of doctrines give us? It tells us, that there is “but one God,” and that he exists “in one Person only.” The former part of this position is Scriptural, but the latter clause of it is completely at variance with the sacred records. That there is only one God, the Bible testifies repeatedly and unequivocally, but that there is only one Person in the Godhead is no where asserted in the divine word, but is on the contrary opposed to the general tenor of the sacred volume, from Genesis to Revelations. While the Scriptures declare that there is no God besides

Jehovah, they mention Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: they ascribe also to each of these, without reserve or limitation, every perfection of Deity; and therefore, as the sacred Writings cannot contradict themselves, there must be a Trinity in Unity—that is, a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, or a three-one Jehovah.

This, our opponents reply, is a contradiction. It is not a contradiction. We do not say or think that God is one and three in the same respects; this would indeed be contradictory and the thing itself impossible. We only contend that he is three in one respect and one in another—that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one in essence, in perfection, in will, in design, in operation, in glory, and in blessedness, but distinct in individual or personal subsistence.

Let this, which is the only proper view of the subject, be duly attended to, and I defy any man to prove the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, a contradiction. When the truth in question is objected to as being contrary to reason, we maintain that this objection is wholly groundless. That it is above reason, or what unassisted reason could never have discovered, I readily admit; but that, in the sense I have stated, it is subversive of reason in any one of her most plain and obvious principles, is a charge which no man in the cool exercise of his rational faculties will ever dare to advance, and which ignorance and prejudice only, will ever attempt to prove. I am most willing to grant

that the Trinity of Divine Persons in the Godhead is a fact full of ineffable mystery; but to reject it on that account, would, to follow the principle to its just consequence, be nothing less than to shut ourselves up in the gloomy cell of universal scepticism. There are ten thousand phenomena in nature, which to the most acute philosopher on earth, are as utterly inexplicable as is this or any other part of theological science to the humblest believer. While then nature is seen to be full of mystery, shall we maintain that there is nothing mysterious in the God of nature? Surely that would be unreasonable in the extreme—especially when his own word proposes to us the inquiry—“Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?”*

But our Socinian adversaries, in opposition to this doctrine, go on to say that it is inconsistent with the express declarations of Scripture itself concerning the Unity of God. I hesitate not however to assert that it is perfectly consistent with every testimony, and with the most express declarations of the Bible on the subject of Divine Unity.

Revelation teaches us again and again that there is only one God, but, as far as my knowledge of Scripture extends, it never asserts directly or indirectly, in one instance, that there is only one Person in the Godhead. But this is what the Socinians must prove, before they can have an inch of ground on which to

* Job xi. 7.

stand. We have no controversy with them about the Unity of God. We believe it as firmly as they. Every passage of Scripture which they advance in support of it, proves only the doctrine which we hold in common, inasmuch as here we stand on one and the same ground. In maintaining that there is only one God, they adhere to the Bible: but when they deny a plurality of persons in the Godhead, they have left the Bible. There is neither in the Old or New Testament a single text to support the negation, but testimonies in Scripture abound to disprove it, and to show, that here they are opposed to almost the whole scheme of revealed truth.

I will now proceed to lay before you, two classes of quotations from the Word of God, in proof of what is advanced in the foregoing statements. The one class includes texts which directly and forcibly convey the notion of a plurality of persons in the Godhead; the other is made up of Scriptures which shew that this plurality consists of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

In Genesis i. 26. we read, “and God said let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness.” Now here is plurality in the Godhead, plainly and repeatedly expressed in the first chapter of the Bible. The persons of the Godhead are holding consultation on the creation of man. But it is plurality in Unity, for we read immediately after, in the 27th verse, “So God created man in *his* own image, in the image of God

created he him." In Genesis iii. 3. the sacred historian informs us, that the Lord God said, "behold the man is become as one of *us* to know good and evil." In Genesis xi. 6, 7, and 8th, the sacred record is, "And the Lord said, behold the people is one, and they have all one language, and this they begin to do, and now nothing will be restrained from them which they have imagined to do—Go to—let *us* go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech: so the Lord (the Lord who had said let *us* go down) scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth." You are next referred to the Book of Ecclesiastes xii. 1. where it is said, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." The original word here translated "Creator" is plural; and the literal rendering of the Hebrew would be, "remember now thy *Creators* in the days of thy youth." This passage thus read, and that which I have already quoted, namely, "God said, let *us* make man in *our* image, after *our* likeness," appear beautifully to illustrate each other. The allusion in the latter to the former, seems marked and striking; and both together contain such clear and satisfactory proof of the point under consideration, that one would think no unprejudiced mind could possibly resist it. In Isaiah vi. 8. we have these remarkable words: "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for *us*?" Is not this plurality in Unity? If not, how is language to express it? In

Isaiah, xli. 21, 22, 23, Jehovah is challenging the gods of the heathen to the exercise of foreknowledge and power,—calling upon them to shew, to make manifest their divinity; and he uses the following language: “Produce your cause, saith the Lord: bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob: let them bring them forth and shew *us* what shall happen: let them shew the former things what they be, that *we* may consider them, and know the latter end of them, or declare *us* things for to come. Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that *we* may know that ye are Gods: yea, do good or do evil, that *we* may be dismayed, and behold it together.” The Socinians evade the force of these passages, by saying, “that in them, God assumes the language and manners of sovereign princes when they issue laws, and signify to their subjects the royal pleasure concerning them; or that he may be considered as addressing the angels.” But let me ask, whether this mode of interpretation can serve any other purpose to persons who are not biassed by strong prejudices, than to shew the weakness of the cause it is intended to uphold? or whether to expose its utter fallacy any thing more is really necessary than barely to mention it? What! shall the infinite, eternal Jehovah, when *he* speaks, be considered as indebted for the appearance of greatness and majesty to the manner and form of expression assumed by the kings of the earth—puny, insignificant, sinful mortals, when they address themselves to their fellow-men?

Surely, I hardly need say, that the very thought is infinitely derogatory to the name and perfections of the ever blessed God. Or, as the latter part of their proposed interpretation of the Scriptures we have just read, would suggest, shall it be said that Jehovah associates angels with him in his counsels and dispensations? I repel the suggestion in the words of the Prophet and the Apostle, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor, hath taught him? with whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and shewed to him the way of understanding? Behold the heavens are not clean in his sight, and he chargeth his angels with folly! but of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory, for ever: Amen."* I ought to state here, before I proceed, that the Hebrew word for God, which in the original Scriptures of the Old Testament is used about two thousand times, is plural, and in that form is often conjoined with a verb in the singular number; a circumstance which, especially as it involves a grammatical anomaly not to be accounted for on the principles of ordinary criticism, affords, to say the least, presumptive evidence of a plurality in Unity in the Divine Being.

2. Let us now attend to the other class of proofs on this subject with which the Bible furnishes us, and

* Isaiah xl. 14.—Job xv. 15.—2 Peter iii. 18.

which shew that the plurality of persons in the Godhead comprehends the sacred Three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I observe in general terms, that every text in the Old and New Testaments, that teaches either expressly or by implication, the divinity and personality of Christ or the Holy Spirit, might be adduced in this place as full and conclusive evidence of the doctrine of the Trinity; for if Christ be a Divine person, and if the Holy Ghost be a Divine person, then the mystery of the Trinity is a necessary consequence. I must, however, confine myself to a few, and only a few of those places which bear directly upon the point before me. In Matthew xxviii. 19, the Saviour says, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name (not in the names) of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Now baptism is an act of solemn worship and adoration; this passage, then, alone, according to the analogies of sound reasoning, contains indisputable proof of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead.* In John xiv. 23. the Redeemer says, "If a man love me he will keep

* "It would look like a just prejudice against our Saviour and his whole Gospel, that, by his express direction, the first entrance to it, which gives the visible and fæderal right to those great blessings that are offered by it, or their initiation to it, should be in the name of two created Beings, (if the one can be called properly so much as a Being according to their hypothesis), and that even in an equality with the supreme and uncreated Being. The plainness of this charge and the great occasion on which it was given, makes this an argument of such force and evidence, that it may justly determine the whole matter."—*Bishop Burnet.*

my words, and my Father will love him ; and *we* will come unto him and make *our* abode with him ;” (language exactly parallel to that in Genesis—“ Let *us* make man in *our* image after *our* likeness ;”) and he adds, “ The Comforter, who is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.”* In John xvi. 13, 14, and 15, we have language still more, if possible, to our purpose : “ When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth ; he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine.” Here is the Spirit guiding into all truth, Christ glorified by the Spirit, and Christ one with the Father in all that is his. What terms could more clearly reveal a Trinity of divine Persons, in glorious, but, to us, incomprehensible Unity ? In 2 Corinth. xiii. 14, the Apostle on behalf of the saints to whom he wrote, offers up a solemn prayer to the triune Jehovah, in which it is also worthy of remark, that he addresses Christ first—“ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all, Amen.” Compare this with the form of benediction commanded to be pronounced upon the children of Israel, under the law. It is recorded in Numbers, vi. 22: “ And the Lord spake unto Moses,

* John xiv. 26.

saying, Speak unto Aaron and to his sons, saying, On this wise shall ye bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee—the Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee—the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my Name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

The threefold repetition of the name, Jehovah, in these verses, along with the concluding sentence, “they shall put my Name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them,” is certainly remarkable, especially, when viewed in the light which is thrown upon it by the apostolic benedictory prayer to the infinite Three, just before quoted. On the whole, what we have advanced, seems at once sanctioned and corroborated by the adorations of the heavenly worshippers, who in Isaiah vi. 3, are said to cry one to another—“Holy, holy, holy is the Lords of Hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Who would dare to say that this threefold ascription of holiness to the Lord of hosts, does not recognize the doctrine of a three one Jehovah, and belong to the Divine Father, the Divine Son, and the Divine Spirit? This sense of the passage is fully confirmed by two inspired writers of the New Testament. In the 12th chap. of the Gospel of John, the Evangelist, when recording the unbelief of the Jews with respect to Christ, having quoted part of the words which were addressed by Jehovah to Isaiah, in this prophetic vision, as verified in that unbelief,

adds, in the 41st verse, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his (that is Christ's) glory, and spake of him." The other testimony to which I refer, is that of Luke in the xxviii chap. of the Acts of the Apostles, where we learn, that the Holy Ghost is the Person who spake by Isaiah to the fathers, the words which the Prophet has recorded in his vi. chapter as addressed to him by Jehovah.

I have dwelt at considerable length on this topic, because of its supreme importance in the scheme of Christian verity. If the doctrine of the Trinity be discarded from our creed, the foundation of the temple of divine truth is gone, and the whole structure must inevitably fall. This article of your faith is not a matter of mere speculation. Right views of it are highly important to comfort and holiness. Communion with the Father, and Christ, and the Holy Spirit, is the ground-work of all true, experimental, and practical religion. The love of the Father manifested to the conscience, the righteousness of the Son imputed to us, and the purifying influence of the Spirit experienced in the mind, constitute the salvation of the soul. A thousand puzzling questions may be asked about this sacred mystery, but with these we have no business to perplex ourselves. Our duty is to abide by the plain meaning of what God says in his word; and to leave all difficulties to be solved by him as he may see good to teach us. Religion consists not in a power or wish to comprehend what is inexplicable, but

in a disposition to believe, trust, adore, and obey, so far as God has been pleased to reveal himself to us.

Perhaps you may wonder that in my quotations no reference was made to the celebrated text in the first Epistle of John, v. 7. My reason for that omission is, that the genuineness of this passage is doubted by learned men on both sides of the question. But it was my wish and determination, in endeavouring to establish this truth, to lay no stress at all on any verse, however appropriate, the Divine authority of which is in the smallest degree doubtful. The doctrine of the Trinity needs no such support. It does not depend for support on one, or ten, or twenty, or a hundred texts. It is a doctrine inwrought with the whole contexture of Revelation. On the Trinitarian hypothesis, "that there are three Persons in one God," the whole of Scripture appears consistent with itself, and comparatively easy to be understood; but on that of the Socinian, "that there is only one God and one Person only in the Godhead;" there are hundreds, if not thousands of passages in the Bible, which it is impossible to understand according to their literal, obvious, and unsophisticated import.

In the *Second* place, The tenets of Socinian theology are wholly anti-scriptural, in rejecting the doctrine of original sin. By original sin, I mean the alienation of the soul of man from God, and the moral depravity which adheres to us all, from our earliest

years; in connexion with the degradation of human nature from its primeval sanctity, by the disobedience of our first parents. Those who call themselves Unitarians, deny that man is originally and inherently depraved. They maintain that we are born as free from the impurity of sin, as a sheet of white paper perfectly clean, is unsullied by any blot or stain; also that inward vice and outward transgression are solely the effects of education, example, or habit. But what say the Scriptures?

In Genesis v. 3. we read—"And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness and after his image, and called his name Seth." To say that the meaning of the sacred historian here is, that Adam begat one of his own species, that is, not a brute or a monster, but a human being possessing the same kind of animal powers and rational faculties as those by which he himself was distinguished, is mere trifling. Why should the Spirit of God employ a man to record a fact which common sense of itself would tell us? The meaning of the Holy Spirit in these words evidently is, that Adam, who had departed from God, begot a son who was a fallen, degenerate creature like himself. In the book of Job xi. 12. it is written, "for vain man would be wise, though man be *born* like a wild ass's colt." In the xiv. chapter of the same book and the 4th verse, the question is asked, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" and the answer is, "not one."

In Psalm, li. 5. David says in application to himself, what we may all adopt with equal propriety, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me!" In Psalm, lviii. 3. David says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies." Solomon, in Proverbs, xxii. 15. says, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child," and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, ii. 3. the Apostle Paul says that we are "by nature the children of wrath."

But if "we are children of wrath by nature," surely no arguments can be necessary to convince us that the reason is because we are by nature sinful. Let us then, instead of denying this humiliating truth, lay it individually to heart—deeply humble ourselves before the Almighty as sinners by nature as well as by practice, and appropriate with unspeakable gratitude and joy the remedy proposed to us in the gospel, in the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

In the *Third* place, In maintaining that the death of Christ is not a satisfaction for sin, the Socinians completely dissent from the doctrines of the Bible in another essential point. They gravely maintain that the death of Christ was intended, and, indeed, suited to answer no such purpose as that of expiating the sins of men—that there was no merit in the shedding of his blood—that his death served only to attest the truth of his testimony—to display the zeal of a martyr, and to render him an example of patient, virtuous suffering.

But really is it not a pity that before they proceeded to these lengths, they did not make a public bargain with mankind at large to throw away their Bibles, or else wholly to resign the exercise of their understanding?

The following is some of the current language of Scripture on the death of Christ: "Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." He "died for the ungodly;" "He suffered for the unjust;" "He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" "He was offered to bear the sins of many;" "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us;" "God hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;" "He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;" "He hath made peace by the blood of his cross;" "He hath redeemed us to God by his blood;" "This is the blood of the new Testament, which was shed for many, for the remission of sins," "He was cut off to make an end of sin, to make reconciliation for iniquity;" "He delivered us from the wrath to come;" "By his own blood he hath entered in once within the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Believers are said to be "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; to be reconciled by his death; and justified by his blood. He came "to give his life a ransom for many." He is "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world," and except we "eat of the flesh of the Son of man and drink of his blood we

are declared to "have no life in us."* Now this is Scripture testimony concerning the Redeemer's death. Can we doubt then for a moment in what light to view that ever memorable event? Is it not evident that the view of Christ's death, as a satisfaction for sin, so completely pervades the Bible, that, as Doctor South most pertinently remarks; "Scripture itself must be crucified as well as Christ, before we can regard it in any other light!" My friends, let us most studiously beware of undervaluing, even in our thoughts, the infinite merit of the sacrifice of Christ. He died that a world might live. There is life eternal through his death, to all who look to him in faith, and humbly put their whole trust in him. Let all our confidence, all our triumph, and all our joy centre in his atoning, redeeming blood.

In the *Fourth* place, The Socinian scheme is diametrically opposed to the essential truths of the Bible, in attributing salvation to human merit, rather than solely to the free and sovereign grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ. The sacred writings are very explicit on this head. Salvation as a whole, and in the several parts or blessings which it comprehends, is traced to the abounding mercy and free favour of God in Christ Jesus, as its divine source, and inexhaustible spring. And faith in the mediation and gracious offices

* Ephes. v. 2.—Rom. v. 6.—1 Peter iii. 12.—Heb. ix. 26 & 28.
 1 Cor. v. 7.—1. Peter ii. 24.—Isaiah liii. 6.—Gal. iii. 13.
 Col. i. 20.—Rev. v. 9.—Matt. xxvi. 28.—Dan. ix. 24 & 26.
 1 Thess. i. 10.—Heb. ix. 12.—1 Peter i. 19.—Rom. v. 10.
 Rom. v. 9.—Matt. xx. 28.—John i. 29.—John vi. 51 & 53.

of Christ, is revealed as the appointed way of obtaining salvation. "God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour. That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." "Who hath saved us, and called us, with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy." "Being justified freely by grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."*

* Ephes. ii. 4—9.—Titus iii. 5—7.—2 Tim. i. 9.—Rom. ix, 16
Rom. iii. 24 & 25.—Ephes. i. 6.

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace to the end, that the promise might be sure to all the seed.” “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” This is the good old way of salvation as pointed out in the sacred volume, but the Socinians dissatisfied with it, have found out a new way. Repentance and a good life, they cry up as the only ground of acceptance with God. The necessity of repentance and the importance of a good life, we fully admit. But where are they spoken of in the Divine word as the foundation of a sinner’s hope, for obtaining peace with God, and the salvation of his soul? No where, we may be well assured, because that would be in direct contrariety to the above passages; but God cannot contradict in one part of his word what he says in another. We should never forget the words of Christ, that, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish. Nor should we ever be unmindful of the Apostle’s exhortation, to be “careful to maintain good works.” But we should as scrupulously avoid putting either the one or the other in the place of the work of Christ. We should remember at all times the solemn declaration, that “other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”* All our trust for eternal life should be in the undeserved love of God, through him; and then we should practice

* Rom. iv. 16.—Acts xvi. 31.—Luke xiii. 3.—Titus iii. 8.
1 Cor. iii. 11.

good works, to shew that our faith in the doctrine is not a delusion but a reality.

In the *Fifth* place, Socinians proceed in direct opposition to the Scriptures, when they deny the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

First, they maintain that the Holy Ghost is not a Divine Person, but only a quality or power of God ; and then they ridicule the notion of being born again by his new creating influence, as enthusiasm and fanaticism. But do we not read that, “except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”? Do we not read of being “created in Christ Jesus, unto good works”—“of being new creatures in Christ, if we really be in him”? Are we not told that, “if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”? Are not believers said to be “washed”—to be “sanctified”—to be “justified” “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God”? Are not they called “the temples of the Holy Ghost, who is in them, and whom they have of God”? Are they not also called “elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”?* If the doctrine of the regeneration and sanctification of the souls of men by the Divine Spirit be not a doctrine of the Old and New Testament, it

* John iii. 5.—Ephs. ii. 10.—1 Cor. v. 19.—Rom. viii. 9.
1 Cor. vi. 11.—1 Cor. vi. 19.—1 Peter i. 2

would be difficult to say what is so. While others lightly esteem this truth, may we hold it fast. And while Socinian unbelievers, setting themselves against the language of inspiration, dare to blaspheme the perfection and office of the Holy Ghost, may we adore his person, put ourselves under his guidance, seek his influence by fervent prayer, and follow his teaching unto eternal life.

In the *Sixth* place, We find the abettors of Socinianism, still further opposed to the glorious doctrines of Revelation, in questioning that the departed spirits of true believers have an immediate entrance into glory.

According to the shewing of these gentlemen, when the bodies of the righteous die, their souls do not then go to heaven, but become insensible, and in that state remain till the morning of the general resurrection. But we are told in the Scriptures, that when Lazarus “died, he was carried by angels into Abraham’s bosom.” His *body* was not carried to communion with the glorified patriarch—his *soul* therefore is intended. The Redeemer said to the dying thief, “this day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” The Apostle says, “we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” He speaks of “absence from the body,” as being immediately succeeded by “presence with the Lord.”* The Apostle

* Luke xvi. 22.—Luke xxiii. 43.—2 Cor. v. 1.—2 Cor. v. 2.

had himself a "desire to depart," not however, because he would pass into a state of insensibility, but because he would be "with Christ, which is far better." And in another place, he speaks of the "spirits of just men made perfect."* You must not be afraid then, my Christian friends, that all your hopes of celestial blessedness at death, will be disappointed. According to the Socinian hypothesis, they would be disappointed; but that hypothesis is as contrary to what the written Word teaches, as darkness is contrary to light. Their fanciful speculations are as visionary, as they are presumptuous and wicked; but your hope, built on the sure testimony of the Lord, shall never make you ashamed, world without end.

Seventhly and *Lastly*, The Socinian system puts a negative on the Scripture doctrine of eternal punishments.

Mr. Belsham affirms, that God would act unjustly in inflicting eternal misery for temporary crimes; and that, consequently, the sufferings of the wicked can be but remedial, and will terminate in their complete purification from moral defilement, and their ultimate restoration to virtue and happiness. But in my humble opinion, this gentleman, instead of taking upon him to decide on what will be just or unjust in the proceedings of the Almighty in a future state towards his finally impenitent adversaries, should have

* Phil. i. 23.—Heb. xii. 23.

attended first, to the previous question: What says Revelation upon this subject? And then, having ascertained *that*, he should have left God to see to the equity or injustice of what his word assures us will be done to the wicked hereafter. The Redeemer declares that, then “the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” If it be argued that the term, “everlasting,” does not always mean endless duration, and that it should not be taken in that acceptation here, I reply, the last part of the argument unfortunately proves too much, and thus confutes itself. If “everlasting,” in the former clause of the text, must not be understood to signify endless duration, then “eternal,” in the latter part of it, cannot fairly be taken in that sense, and so the doctrine of the never ending felicity of the righteous will fall to the ground.

Brethren, the Divine Word assures us, that “they who know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power”—that the “smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever”—that the fire of hell is “unquenchable”—that the misery of the lost is a “worm that dieth not—a fire that is not quenched.”* Let us believe these awful sayings of God; flee from the wrath

* Matthew xxv. 46.—2 Thess. i. 9.—Rev. xiv. 11.—
Matthew iii 12.—Mark ix. 44, 46, & 48.

to come ; seek refuge and salvation in Christ, and live to his glory on earth, that we may escape the second death,* “the death that never dies,” and have an entrance at last into life eternal.

Now to the Father who loved us, to the Son who died for us, and to the Holy Spirit, who alone can sanctify us, be honour, praise, and glory, for ever :—
Amen.

* Rev. xx. 6.

LECTURE III.



SOCINIANISM INDEFENSIBLE ON THE PRINCIPLES OF
RIGHT REASON, AND CHARGEABLE WITH GROSS
ABSURDITIES.

I CORINTHIANS, i. 20.

*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is
the disputer of this world? hath not God made
foolish the wisdom of this world?*

THE Socinians call themselves rational Christians. Honourable and imposing appellation! Rational Christians! They are the men, no doubt, and wisdom must die with them! They have had the sense and magnanimity to reject from the religion of Jesus, every thing in it unworthy of the human understanding, and the superior intelligence and good fortune to monopolize all in Christianity, that deserves to be denominated rational. The whole Christian world, with the exception alone of these honoured few, who have ventured to reduce the doctrines of Revelation to little more

than a system of unbelief, are in the affairs of religion, no better than fools. This is the meaning evidently intended to be conveyed by the Socinians, in appropriating to themselves the flattering epithet—rational. It is, however, matter of congratulation, my Trinitarian friends, that we have so much sagacity, as to enable us to make this natural and easy inference from premises so plain and obvious. But let us beware of pleasing ourselves too soon, with the idea that we have even a little rationality left us. Are we sure that the conclusion which we have now come to, is just? Persons of inferior understandings should be very careful how they proceed to conclusions. Yet the one before us, must be unquestionably right.

The friends of orthodoxy are weak-minded people. Dr. Priestley, Mr. Belsham, and other abettors of modern Socinianism, maintain that Christ was fallible, and that the Apostle Paul, in his writings, is guilty of reasoning fallaciously, in a manner unworthy of a man of sound understanding, and an unprejudiced mind. Now, if these wisest of men, scruple not to call the Saviour of the world, in whom are said to dwell all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, “fallible,” and even “peccable,” and to denominate the Apostle of the Gentiles, who was taught the will of God by special revelation, “an inconclusive reasoner, surely we, who are resolved at every hazard, to believe implicitly the instructions of the New Testament,

ought to think ourselves treated with great lenity, if no harder terms be applied to us, than the words, irrational and fools.

The indignity cast upon us, is nothing compared with the dishonour which is done to the Son of God, both in his own person and in the person of his inspired messenger. Let me entreat you to consider these things a little more attentively.

The infinitely wise and adorable Saviour, is pronounced fallible. A divinely inspired Apostle, is termed a weak and inconclusive reasoner. Orthodox Christians of every name, with their great majority of learned and pious men, are reflected on as people of weak and silly minds, or enslaved at least by foolish prejudices; and then, in the face of all, they (the Socinians) are styled, "rational Christians!" Say then, whether it is not passing strange, that Trinitarians of every class should not before now have come forward, and have proposed, and carried unanimously, a vote of thanks to the Socinians, for their extraordinary modesty and their unexampled liberality?

But, if the religious body of whom I speak, be rational Christians, they are Bible Christians too. For reason and Revelation never oppose each other; they are in all things mutual supporters. Revelation is superior to reason, but never contrary to it. What Revelation teaches, reason, if she be performing her proper office, invariably approves, though she be unable fully to comprehend the subject of communication.

But as Socinianism, as we have already seen, is diametrically opposed to the doctrines of Scripture in nearly every point of essential moment, it must therefore be no less inconsistent with the dictates of sound reason. This brings me to the subject of the present lecture, which is, to endeavour to show that the Socinian system is as contrary to well-regulated reason, as it is opposed to the Bible itself.

I shall *First* define the terms “right reason;”

Secondly, point out the province of reason in matters of religion :

Thirdly, show that the reasoning faculty, properly exercised in religious inquiries, is directly opposed to the spirit and genius of Socinianism :

And *Fourthly*, mention some of the absurdities with which the Socinian scheme of theology is chargeable.

In the *First* place, I am to define the terms “right reason.” Reason is a noble faculty of the human mind. It is that power of the soul of man by which he is capable of receiving information, and gaining knowledge on an infinite variety of subjects, natural and divine. It is that faculty of the soul, which, when the necessary data are given, enables us to lay down clear and undoubted principles, to find out proper mediums of argument, to compare one proposition with another, to draw just and appropriate conclusions, to distinguish between things that differ, and to decide rightly upon every subject that comes within the sphere of faith and duty allotted to us by the great

Creator. Reason has not the power of itself to discover the first principles of knowledge in any of its branches. It can discern nothing without some previous information on which to proceed. It is indebted alike in its first efforts, and in all its subsequent operations, to instruction originally communicated. Without instruction, there is every cause to believe reason would be completely inert, and eternally unproductive of a single idea. Reason is nothing more than the capacity to receive knowledge, to augment its stores by the use of proper means, and to apply it to the uses for which it is intended. In some, the reasoning powers are much weaker than they appear to be in others: but in all, as far as can be perceived, reason is capable of unlimited improvement. There is good ground to believe and expect, that in Heaven, this intellectual faculty will be expanding her powers, and enlarging her acquisitions for ever and ever.

Right reason, is reason under a proper influence—reason inclined to take a proper direction—reason brought and kept under proper moral and religious discipline—reason animated by sacred motives—reason governed by spiritual considerations: in a word, reason enlightened, renewed, and sanctified by the holy teaching and purifying influence of the Spirit of God. “God made man upright,” and so long as his nature retained its original purity, reason continued right and good. But, when man fell by disobedience, and lost his primeval righteousness, then human reason became in

a religious point of view, perverted, corrupted—nay, totally deranged. Since the entrance of sin into the world through the transgression of our original progenitors, the reason of man, till rectified by the “wisdom that is from above,” is in a most deplorable state. It is blinded by ignorance. It is bound fast by prejudice. Pride intoxicates it. Vanity and presumption strangely pervert its exercise; and it is enslaved by the love of sin and the fear of the world. There is nothing too wild in opinion; nothing too extravagant in error; and nothing too vile and abominable in practice, for it to engender and propagate. Would you see this exemplified in fact? Look at the religious state of mankind in general, and you will see the most melancholy proof of it. The stupid idolatry of Pagans, the stubborn unbelief of Jews, the deeply rooted superstition of Mahometans, and the pestilential heresies, that, from age to age, seek to spread their deadly contagion in the church of God, are what human reason in her dark and sinful condition lends her countenance to encourage, her aid to promote, and exerts all her influence to extend and establish. Our reason then needs to be renewed by the God of all grace, shining upon the understanding by his Spirit and Word, and imparting to the judgment, spiritual perceptions, and holy affections to the mind. It is *right* reason alone, that can be of saving advantage in every concern and disquisition of a religious nature. That is, reason recovered to the fear of God, to reve-

rence for the Scriptures, to true humility, to freedom from prejudice, to the love of the gospel, to adoration of the Saviour, to the hatred of all evil, and to the approval of things only that are excellent.

In the *Second* place, I proceed to point out the province of reason, in matters of religion. This is a very important part of our subject. Reason is a talent entrusted to our care by the great Lord of all. It is given to us for sacred, highly interesting, and infinitely momentous objects. It is the will of God that we use our reason. It is his pleasure and command that we diligently improve it. And it is matter of supreme and individual obligation, so to employ our reasoning faculty, in the sphere which Providence has marked out for us, as to serve the interest of the community, to secure our own salvation, and to promote the glory of God our Creator, Christ our Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit, our Sanctifier and Guide. A mistaken view of the province of reason in the great and solemn concerns of religion, is an evil fraught with pernicious consequences wherever it exists. It is this evil which leads some to set reason above Revelation, and consequently to depreciate the Word of God. It is this evil again which prompts others to consider and speak of reason as having nothing or little to do in religion; and under the influence of this idea, causes them to fail in making that use of reason for which it is calculated, intended, and given, presumptuously leaving every thing to be done by the agency of sovereign

grace. It is this evil, further, that keeps numbers wavering in perpetual uncertainty, tossed about continually on the billows of conflicting and ever changing opinion, and never arriving at any fixed point. I remark again, it is this sore evil that leads thousands to embrace, and tenaciously to maintain, the most dangerous and destructive errors. I repeat the sentiment therefore already advanced, which, in other words, is, that the inquiry before us in this part of the subject, is one of great, and, I may safely add, of unspeakably high importance.

The following quotation, is an extract from the writings of Dr. Watts: "Reason," says he, "has a great deal to do in religion, namely, to find out the rule (of faith), to compare the parts of this rule one with another, to explain the one by the other, to give the grammatical and logical sense of the expressions, and exclude self-contradictory interpretations, as well as interpretations contrary to reason. But," continues the same author, "it is not to set itself up as a judge of those truths expressed therein, which are asserted by a superior and infallible Dictator, God himself. Reason requires," he says further, "and commands even the subjection of all its own powers to a truth thus divinely attested; for it is as possible, and as proper, that God should propose doctrines to our understanding which it cannot comprehend, as duties to our practice of which we cannot see the reason. For he is equally superior to our understanding and

will, and he puts the obedience of both to a trial." This passage is, in my opinion, very excellent, and well entitled to your serious consideration. But, perhaps, on a question so important as the one which it involves, it is desirable to descend a little more to particulars. The province of reason then, in matters of religion, comprehends four things.

1. It is the part of reason to examine the evidences of the divine origin and authority of Revelation.

The Bible comes to me professing to be the word of God. It tells me, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," that "holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." But before I receive the sacred volume as the word of the Almighty, I have a right, and it is my duty to inquire most minutely into the nature and grounds of that evidence by which its claim to this high character is established. Else, for any thing I know, I may be receiving a fabrication. If it be the word of God, it will have credentials corresponding alike with the Divinity of the source from whence it emanates, and the nature, import, and design of the message which it conveys. God will have put his mark, his signature, his seal upon it, to shew that it is his Word, and to discover these is the office of reason. I need not enlarge here, to show you how fully the Bible is proved to be the word of Jehovah, by evidence external and

* 2 Tim. iii. 16—2 Peter i. 21.

internal; by the miracles wrought by the Prophets and Apostles; by the predictions that have been accomplished, and others that are fulfilling continually in the world; by its holy precepts, its ineffable doctrines and mysteries, and its divinely glorious effects in the experience, living and dying, of all who sincerely and cordially believe it.

2. Another part of the office of reason in religious inquiries, is, to ascertain the sense of Scripture.

When I am satisfied that the Revelation contained in the Bible is divinely accredited, then my next business is with the import and application of its language. Here is a message from God. What is its signification? and what are the bearings of that signification on mankind in general, and on myself in particular? Now to find out the true sense of words, is a proper exercise of the understanding. It is a legitimate task for reason to undertake. For this, among other objects, my reason was given me, that through the medium of language I might have intercourse with my fellow men, and learn the mind of God, my Saviour, Governor, and Judge. But then, in order to realize the fulfilment of these gracious designs in the bestowment of my reason, my understanding must enter into the meaning of the terms addressed to me, whether the communication be from men or from God. And never does the human mind engage in an employment more sublime, than when an individual sits down humble, sincere, and prayerful,

to ascertain by fair and just modes of interpretation, the genuine import of the words in which God speaks to him.

3. It belongs to the province of reason in religious investigation, implicitly to believe every doctrine which Revelation teaches. We have no right to suspend our assent on a single question, about the fitness or unfitness of any sentiment that is clearly and plainly contained in the language of Scripture. Our highest duty in every such instance, is immediate and unqualified assent; and, if the doctrine in question connect with it difficulties which we cannot obviate, we are to adore where we cannot comprehend. To act otherwise, is to reply against God, and to make our reason the standard of what should be made known by the all wise Jehovah in a Revelation of himself, his inscrutable counsels, and his wonderful dispensations.

4. An important part of the office of reason is, to apply the instructions furnished by the Divine writings to all the specific purposes for which they are recorded. These instructions are as diversified and as numerous as the relations, the obligations, the circumstances, the trials, and the vicissitudes of human life. It is then the province of reason to make their appropriation, and to derive from each, so far as it relates to us, the knowledge, the wisdom, the caution, the reproof, the correction, or the comfort, and strength which it was designed to communicate. Such is the

scope which Revelation offers, and which religion furnishes for the exercise of our rational faculties. Let us seek, let us desire no wider range. Within these sacred limits we cannot too much employ the reason which God has vouchsafed to us. The more use we make of it, according to the line which these bounds mark out for us, the more scriptural, enlightened, and consistent our religious profession and character will be. But if, on the contrary, we are found without the precincts of this enclosure, our Christianity may be vain, superficial, presumptuous, and trifling ; but it will not be judicious, solid, and evangelical.

In the *Third* place, I propose to show that the proper exercise of the reasoning faculty in religion, is altogether unfavourable to the spirit and genius of Socinianism.

Under this division of the lecture, your attention is requested to five particulars.

1. Right reason feels and acknowledges its own insufficiency to be our guide, in the great business of religion and salvation. It proclaims to us its weakness, especially, as enervated by the fall ; its darkness, being enveloped in the mists of ignorance and the clouds of prejudice ; and its exceeding depravity, arising from the moral corruption and evil which sin has communicated to it. It echoes to us the wise counsels of Scripture ; “Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding ;”*

* Prov. iii. 5.

“Be not wise in thine own eyes.” “He who trusteth in his own heart is a fool.” “Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* But are these the admonitions of right reason, as well as of the sacred Word? Then Socinianism is not only incapable of being defended by the former, but its spirit and language are plainly condemned by it. Socinianism says many fine things about the dignity of human reason, puts her in the chair of infallibility, makes her our standard, our supreme umpire in every case of difficulty and doubt. Can any two things then be more opposite than this doctrine, and the salutary exercise of reason, restored to itself, and moving in its proper sphere?

2. Right reason is humble and teachable, looking for direction in spiritual things to a higher source than itself. But Socinian writers and teachers, so far from being humble and teachable, pride themselves in their own understandings; pertinaciously adhering to opinions, which nothing but the most ostentatious ideas of their own superior light and wisdom can have led them to adopt; and forming a determination not to

* Proverbs iii. 7.—Proverbs xxviii. 26.—1 Cor. iii. 18.—
1 Cor. ii. 14.

regulate their sentiments by the rule which is granted to us from above, but to make every thing in that rule bend to the standard of their preconceived notions. But can a system which thus swells with arrogance, whose element is consummate vanity, and which can live only on presumption and vain glory, be defended by a proper use of the reasoning faculty? No—whatever fooleries in religion reason may be perverted to countenance while it is unrenewed by Divine grace, when once it is emancipated from the tyranny of ignorance and sin, and brought under the power of evangelical feeling and the influence of vital godliness, with such a spirit as that which is cherished by this system, it will have no fellowship.

3. Right reason connects with every religious investigation the spirit of devotion and the practice of fervent prayer.

When David, the king of Israel, engaged in reading the Scriptures, his heart and his voice were lifted up to God in earnest supplication, and his cry was, “open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” And does not right reason teach the necessity and importance of what Scripture example in this illustrious instance unequivocally recommends? Is it not rational in the highest degree, that every time we turn our attention to the things of God, we should seek his teaching in prayer? Who can teach us spiritual knowledge but himself alone? Who can give us a true and saving acquaintance with the great things

of his law but his Holy Spirit? But can we expect him to instruct us unless we ask him to be our teacher? "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally," that is, to all men who ask, "and upbraideth not." But if we weigh the spirit and practice of Socinian religionists in this balance, they will be found wanting. Are they men of prayer, men of devotion, men who hold frequent intercourse with God, men who live in communion with Christ and the Holy Spirit? They answer not to this description of character. For they deny the Divine Person of the Holy Spirit, and consequently can have no fellowship with him as the Spirit, the Author, and Inspirer of prayer. And they exclude from Christianity the merits and intercession of Christ, through whose mediation alone the supplications of the guilty can be accepted. But let their own publications speak to this point. In the "Unitarian Scheme," as described by Mr. Belsham, in his review of Mr. Wilberforce's Treatise, not one sentence occurs on the propriety of prayer. "Prayer forms no part of Mr. B's system. In no one line of his work does he recognise it as a Christian duty; indeed the mention of it has not once escaped him,"* Judge ye, my friends, whether right reason will ever associate itself on the side of such a form of religion as this. A plan of religion in which instructions relative to prayer do not

* Dr. Magee.

form a leading feature, is certainly as much like a contradiction in terms as possible. One would think men ought to call it any thing but religion. The term religion ought never to be so degraded as to be brought into such unhallowed association.

4. Right reason never rejects a doctrine because it is mysterious. We are not to conclude that a doctrine, if mysterious, is on that account necessarily from God. But to declare and deliberately maintain, that God has not revealed a truth, merely because what is revealed, is to us inexplicable, is so far from being rational, that it is reason in a frenzy, it is reason run mad, it is reason possessed by the devil.

If this wild outrageous principle be admitted, I may as well shut my Bible and lock up all my senses, for I cannot be consistent till I believe nothing. Not a subject can be named which the human mind can be said fully to comprehend. Who can explain the laws by which a grain of seed when sown rises up and waxes to be a great tree? or the laws by which the rain falls, the thunder rolls, and the tempest rages? We may know the immediate cause, but we can no more explain how these things are, than we can explain the nature and essence of Deity. We cannot comprehend the structure of a worm, of the meanest insect, of a particle of sand. Who can tell what his soul is, or how it is united to his body? Who can tell what is, or where, the principle of life within us? It were as easy to illustrate the most mysterious doctrine of revelation, as

to explain by what power we direct the eye to its object, or guide the hand in its operations. To take the Socinians on their own hypothesis;—Who can explain or comprehend the Unity of God? Who can tell what it is? Who, after giving the most exact definition of it, will not be just where he was when he began, as far as ever from any comprehension of its essential nature? Who can explain the eternity, the immensity, the spirituality of God? Every perfection of Deity is to us as inexplicable as the doctrine of the Trinity.* The Socinian, therefore, has difficulties to encounter as great as any that we have. All the difference between us on the difficulties that attach to our respective creeds is, that he chooses, as he thinks, to have fewer. But then, according to the principle which forms one bulwark of his system, namely, that we are to believe nothing which we cannot comprehend, he can never be consistent till he become an unbeliever in every thing. Now, whether such a system can be defended on the principles of right reason, I will leave you again to judge.

Supposing Christianity to be divested of its mysteries, it would become liable to objections of a different kind. The very men who now profess to disbelieve it, solely on account of its mysterious doctrines, would probably be among the first to reject it, were no such doctrines found in it. They would tell us, that there

* Dr. Jack's Discourse on Mysteries in Religion.

was nothing in it worthy of the interposition of heaven, nothing that bore the stamp and impress of divinity. They would exclaim against it, as too simple to have proceeded from infinite wisdom, as comprehending nothing but what the mind of man without supernatural aid might have discovered or contrived. “Why refer us to heaven,” they would say, “for what might have been effected upon earth? Why suppose that to be the work of God, which might be the work of man?” What is the conclusion evidently deducible from these reasonings? It is this, that the doctrine which pretended to be from God, and yet contained no mysteries, would want one essential proof of its Divine original. If the Holy writings be designed to inform us respecting the nature, the counsels, and the dispensations of the most High God, and he himself be infinite and incomprehensible, those writings must contain many things too high for us to explain. When I consider that all his other works transcend my conceptions, had Revelation been perfectly level to my capacity, I should have concluded that it did not proceed from him because it wanted his usual signature.*

5. Right reason thankfully and implicitly follows the light of Divine Revelation; and our religion can admit of a rational defence only as we tread in the footsteps of reason in this important particular. But the abettors of Socinian tenets, instead of following

* Dr. Jack's Discourse on Mysteries in Religion.

thankfully and implicitly the light of Divine Revelation, find it convenient and necessary for their scheme, to exclude as much of that light as possible, and to obscure that portion of it which is suffered to remain. Many parts of Scripture they *take* away, and many other parts of the Divine word they *explain* away. So that after what they dispose of and what they obscure, there is very little of the clear light of revealed Truth of which they are willing to avail themselves. Socinus, when having demanded testimony from the Bible in proof of satisfaction for sin by the death of Christ, affirmed that, for his part, though such a thing should be found not once but frequently in the sacred records, he would not on that account believe it to be so.

In the *Fourth* place, It was proposed to mention some of the absurdities with which the Socinian scheme of theology is chargeable.

1. If Socinianism be true, the Jews committed no crime in putting Christ to death. They put him to death for the sin of blasphemy, or to use their own words, because "that being a man he made himself God." It is unquestionable that Christ spoke of himself to the Jews as a Divine Person. He declared himself "the Son of God."* By the use of this language, by the appropriation of this title, he was understood alike by the Jews, the High Priest, and the Evangelists,

* John x. 33.—Matthew xxi. 37.—John iii. 17.

to put himself on an equality with God. Christ knew that this was the meaning which they attached to his expressions. If, therefore, they had been mistaken, and he had intended no such signification, would he not have rectified their error? But he never so much as once hinted that they attached an improper meaning to his words. Now, if he were, as the Socinian hypothesis alleges, only a man, he was, in my opinion, justly chargeable with blasphemy. For in making himself equal with God, he was in effect declaring God to be neither greater, wiser, nor better, than himself. But if he were a blasphemer, then, the Jews in putting him to death, instead of incurring guilt, discharged an imperious duty. They obeyed the Divine law, which, under the Mosaic economy, commanded blasphemy to be punished with death. And what shall we think of a religious system, which thus, by plain inference, brings in guiltless the perpetrators of the most horrid crime that was ever committed upon the face of the earth, the murder of the Son of God? To this consequence, however, the Socinian doctrine inevitably leads.

2. If the sentiments held by those who call themselves Unitarians be true, the Apostles are fairly chargeable with the guilt of leading men into idolatry. In their writings the Apostles give to Christ the name of God, they ascribe to him the perfections of Deity, they attribute to him all the works of Jehovah; and they pay him Divine worship and honour. And, guided

by their instructions and animated by their example, thousands and millions and hundreds of millions have given the same homage and glory to Christ, in all these particulars. But if Christ be not truly God, we cannot speak of him as such, and worship him, without being guilty of the heinous sin of idolatry. Yet no man can follow either the Apostles or the Prophets, as his guides in religion, without both believing Christ to be Divine, and paying him appropriate honours. According then to the system which we now oppose, our inspired teachers, those who should lead us into the truth and nothing but the truth, are, of all persons, the very men who lead us most directly into the greatest of all errors.

3. If the advocates of the Socinian scheme of doctrine be right in their opinions concerning Christ, the Apostles, the primitive Christians, and all in succeeding ages who have trod in their steps, are lost, eternally lost. If their opinions can be well established, if they be founded in truth, this conclusion is unavoidable. The Apostles and primitive believers trusted Christ. Stephen in his departing moments said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The Apostle Paul writing to Timothy says, "I know whom I have *believed* or *trusted*, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day."* And in his Epistle to the Ephesians,

* 2 Timothy i. 12.

speaking of himself and others he says, "that we should be to the praise of his glory who first *trusted* in Christ."* But "Christ," say our adversaries, "is only a man;" and the Lord, in his Word, by the Prophet Jeremiah, the xvii. chap. 5th ver. says, "Cursed be the man who trusteth in man and maketh flesh his arm." Nothing then can be plainer, than that, according to the Socinian scheme, the curse of Jehovah was upon the Apostle Paul and upon the primitive saints to whom he wrote, for they made "flesh their arm," and upon the martyr Stephen in his dying moments, for he died committing his soul to a man.

If Christ be only a man, or only a mere creature, there can be nothing unfair in substituting for him in any part of the New Testament, a man or creature; and then, with the exception of that variation, reading the passages as they stood before. Dr. Dwight, an American Divine of high celebrity, has followed this course in reference to a number of texts, with a view at once to try the merits and expose the absurdities of the Socinian account of Christ. That he might not, however, by the name of a man, shock the feelings of his readers, he has substituted Gabriel for Christ. The following, is a part of the selection of passages which he has made. I have transcribed it from the second volume of his works. "In the beginning was

* Ephes. i. 12.

Gabriel, and Gabriel was with God, and Gabriel was God. By him were all things made, and without him was not any thing made that was made. And Gabriel became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. For by Gabriel were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible. All things were created by him and for him. Of him, as concerning the flesh, Gabriel came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Gabriel being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also, hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Gabriel every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth, and that every tongue should confess that Gabriel is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The throne of God and Gabriel. Every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, heard I, saying, "blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him, that sitteth upon the throne, and unto Gabriel for ever and ever."*

These, my friends, are a few specimens of the gross, the shocking absurdities to which we must be led, if we presume to set up our own reason as

* John i. 1—3.—John i. 14.—Col. i. 16.—Rom. ix. 5.—Phil. ii. 6—11.—Rev. xxii. 3.—Rev. v. 12.

a standard against the clear and infallible dictates of God's word. Let us reverence the Scriptures, rejoice in the light they afford, and walk in the faith of their doctrines. Let this be our conduct, as we value our souls, as we value good sense, sound reason, and genuine piety. "I commend you to God and to the Word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified."*

* Acts xx. 32.

LECTURE IV.



THE RESEMBLANCE OF SOCINIANISM TO INFIDELITY.

MATTHEW, xii. 30.

“He that is not with me, is against me.”

OUR object, this evening, is to shew that Socinianism or, as its friends and supporters otherwise term it, “Unitarian Theology,” is, for the most part, a system of Infidelity. I am well aware, that the advocates and admirers of this scheme of doctrine are not Infidels in the full sense of the word. Nor does my subject pledge me to consider or represent them in that character in the discussion which is now before us. Though I cannot help declaring it as my opinion, deeply as I should ever regret any man’s conversion to absolute Deism, that if the Socinians, as they deny in substance the faith of the Gospel, would go over at

once to the camp of Infidelity, they would appear quite as much in character as they do now; it would be, to say the least, no less honourable for themselves, and, if we may judge from appearances, better, rather than worse, for the interests of true religion. I thus think and speak, because the difference substantially, between the Socinian and Infidel schools is so slight and immaterial, that the disciples of the former are, in reality, little better than Deists in disguise, Deists bearing the Christian name. Their system, when resolved into its essential principles, amounts to little, if any thing more than Deism under the garb of Christianity. Perhaps this description of it, is as fair and appropriate as any other which could well be given. If, therefore, as they reject in substance the evangelical doctrines, they would also renounce the Christian name and appear in their true colours, I am persuaded that they would be fully as much respected by the reflecting part of the Public, and there would be less danger to the ignorant and unwary of being decoyed and injured by their exceedingly pernicious errors.

The abettors of Infidelity are much divided among themselves in their opinions on religious subjects, so much so, as to afford reason for their being arranged under several distinct classes, whose respective creeds exhibit a very considerable diversity of sentiment. But Dr. Clarke says, that the only true Deists are "those who, on the evidence of the light of nature, without a Divine Revelation, believe the existence,

perfections, and providence of God, the obligations of natural religion, and a state of future retribution. The following, then, are the main ostensible points of difference between the Socinian portion of the community, and those who have embraced the principles of what this writer denominates "true Deism." The former acknowledge the Bible to be a Revelation from God ; the latter reject the Scriptures altogether as a human fabrication. The former recognize the commission of Christ as a Prophet and Teacher, invested with Divine authority ; the latter regard him as an impostor. The former believe the resurrection of Christ ; the latter treat the narrative of the resurrection as an idle story. These few things excepted, the two parties in question occupy common ground. I said, that these are the main *ostensible* points of difference between them, because, if we fully and impartially examine the distinction between them, even on these grounds, we shall find it to be apparent rather than real ; to consist in words more than in things ; and so small, as to be entitled to comparatively little consideration. When we consider that the Socinians deny the plenary inspiration of the Scripture, and, by their modes of interpreting the sacred Word, render many parts of it devoid of meaning ; when we take into the account, the degrading notions which they entertain of Christ, degrading especially, when beheld in contrast with the exalted views which are given of him in Revelation ; and when

we think further of the comparatively low place which the resurrection of Christ, according to their tenets, occupies in the economy of salvation, may we not safely commit it to a fair and impartial examination, to decide whether the distinction between the Socinian and the Infidel does not almost entirely vanish. Are they not brethren in sentiments? Is not their cause in substance one and the same? Do they not maintain the same essential principles? Is not the Infidel the more consistent, and, to the unguarded, the less dangerous of the two? Can the Socinians themselves be insensible of all this? And if we, who profess to believe implicitly the doctrines and facts of Divine Revelation, were to regard them as not belonging in effect to the Deistical brotherhood, would they not have additional cause to smile at our simplicity?

The title of the present Lecture may lead to the following division :

Socinianism is a system of Infidelity, *First*, in most of its tenets;

Secondly, in its general spirit ;

And *Thirdly*, in its general tendency.

In the *First* place, Socinianism is a system of Infidelity in most of its tenets. This, I presume, will appear from the following considerations.

1. The followers of Socinus, or, that none may mistake my meaning, Antitrinitarians, believe the Infidel doctrine of the sufficiency of reason as our guide in religion. I say, the *Infidel* doctrine, for the

sufficiency of reason, to answer the purposes and supersede the necessity of a Revelation from heaven to instruct us in sacred things, is the grand principle on which the whole system of professed and acknowledged unbelievers rests. Now, though Socinians avow themselves friends of Revelation, yet they are as lavish in their praises of human reason, exalt it to as high honours, and speak of it in as high terms as Deists. For aught that I can see, the representations and reasonings of the former on the prerogatives of reason in religious inquiries, go as far by natural and obvious implication, to set aside the necessity of a special Revelation from above, as any thing which is advanced for the same purpose by the latter. To make reason the grand criterion of what is right or wrong in the book of God, of what it is proper or improper for God to reveal in his word, is to assume, that we are not in want of a Revelation, that our reason is adequate for every purpose which Revelation can answer. Infidels cannot say more than this language implies, either in favour of the fancied sufficiency of our reasoning powers, or to invalidate the divinely authoritative claims of the sacred volume. We may conclude, and I think on sure ground, that a Revelation of the Divine will and character would not have been vouchsafed to man, had it not been indispensably necessary. But where can be our need of Revelation, either to correct the errors, to aid the infirmities, or supply the defects of our reason, if, as the Socinians contend, reason itself is to sit in judgment on the pro-

priety or impropriety of the doctrines and histories which Revelation contains. With such principles, to argue for the necessity of Revelation, seems to me absurd in the extreme. If this be not to set reason above the sacred writings, at any rate to exalt it higher must, I think, be impossible. Surely, the Judge ought to be master of the subject on which he is called to give his opinion, and to pronounce a definitive sentence. Doubtless the standard should be considered more accurate than that which is to be adjusted by it. Certainly then, if reason is to decide upon what we are to receive or reject in the Holy Scriptures, it must occupy a superior place. But when once you elevate reason above Scripture, that very moment you betray Revelation into the hands of its enemies. You may profess to be its friends, but in truth you are its foes. You have yourselves done it a mortal injury; for, by relinquishing its indispensable necessity, you surrender to its opponents the main principle on which its defence can be invincibly conducted.—God does nothing in vain. But if reason had been of itself sufficient, Revelation would have been an unnecessary bestowment. You thus unite with its bitterest adversaries in the very boldest of their attempts to overthrow it. I will leave impartial judges to determine how far this is done by the advocates of Socinian doctrine.

2. Socinians declare Christ and the Holy Spirit to have no part in the perfections and honours of God-head, which is another tenet of the Infidel school.

The God of the Scriptures is the Triune Jehovah, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This, according to the testimonies of inspiration, is the one, the living, and the only true God. This is the God of all who truly believe the written Word. He is the God, whose name true believers know, whose perfections they adore, whose glories they admire, whose character they love, whose mercy they trust, whose authority they revere, whose worship they delight to observe, and whose commands they rejoice to keep. In obedience to the command of the Father, they put their whole trust for salvation in the mediation of the Son. In honouring the Son they honour the Father, and, through the all-gracious communication of the Spirit, they have fellowship with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. They pay to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, equal honours and undivided glory, and are consecrated to the eternal praise of the infinite three-one Jehovah, their Creator, Redeemer, and Preserver. From the Scriptures alone believers could have derived this precious, invaluable, saving knowledge of the Most High. The doctrines which have arrested their attention in this view of the character of God, are peculiar to the Bible, and have never been known but where the light of revealed truth was enjoyed. The opponents of the doctrine of the Trinity say, that the primitive Christians learned it from the writings and followers of Plato. But there is, I think, far better ground for the opposite

opinion, that any slight acquaintance with this truth which Plato and his disciples might possess, was owing to the faint glimmerings of the light of Revelation, communicated originally to the Patriarchs, and afterwards more clearly to the Jews, and which, through the medium of imperfect tradition and occasional indirect intercourse between God's people and the other nations, continued from age to age to shine, though with feeble rays, upon the heathen world. But this God whom the Scriptures make known, Infidelity refuses to acknowledge and utterly disclaims. He has no place in any of its doctrines. The God of unbelievers is a Being of infinite perfection indeed, to whom are ascribed uncreated glory, ineffable majesty, unchanging excellence, unbounded goodness, incomprehensible blessedness, and eternal duration, but subsisting in one person only. I scarcely need to tell you, that this is not the God of the Bible. With the Scriptures in your possession, you know or should know, that Revelation exhibits Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as each possessing all the perfections of Deity, and as being in individual subsistence and undivided essence the only true Jehovah. God as being one person only, then, has no existence but in the imagination of the unbeliever. But this is the God of the Socinian. Say then, whether both Scripture and reason do not combine to place him on a level with the Infidel. He and the Infidel have the same notions of God. If it be not Infidelity to declare that

Christ and the Holy Spirit are not one with the Father, where shall we find it? The Socinian is an unbeliever with respect to the Scriptural character of God, an article of faith which lies at the foundation of all true religion.

3. Those who adopt Socinian sentiments are justly chargeable with Infidelity, in pronouncing the peculiar and distinguishing doctrines of the Bible unworthy of human belief. The pre-existence of Christ, the union of the Divine and human natures in one person, the vicarious nature of his death, the atoning efficacy of his blood, his offices as Mediator, the gracious design of his resurrection, ascension, and appearance in heaven; the sin, guilt, and misery of man as an apostate degenerate creature; the sovereignty of grace; the new birth or regeneration by the Holy Spirit; justification by faith in the perfect obedience and all-sufficient death of the Son of God; the present security and the certain final salvation of true believers, together with the eternal condemnation of all who live and die unconverted to God, are subjects which run through the Scriptures, pervading more or less every part of the sacred pages, but especially the New Testament. These subjects, in their developement and appropriate application for the instruction, comfort, and holiness of the saints, array the Gospel with all its glory. If these be taken away from the holy records, not only will the whole aspect of Scripture be changed, but the very substance of revealed truth will be removed and

gone. In a word, the Bible and these topics are one and the same. They belong to the very essence of the Jewish and Christian Revelation. Yet it is these things which provoke alike the indignation of the avowed Infidel and the bitterest enmity and opposition of the Socinian, assuming the Christian name. The former acknowledging them unquestionably to be in the Divine word, hates it on their account; and the latter, wishful to receive the sacred writings, yet determined to reject those important subjects which meet him in every page, is engaged in everlasting attempts to make the Bible speak a language directly the reverse of what it does speak in reality. It is impossible here to vindicate the Socinian from the charge of a species of Infidelity. He has the very same prejudices in kind, the very same objections, and the very same determined hostility against those truths of the Gospel which constitute its peculiar and distinguishing glory, as those which characterize the most confirmed unbelievers. A little reflection may suffice to satisfy us that a man can never make up his mind to become or continue a Socinian, till he has, if he knows any thing of the volume of inspiration, come to a resolution not to submit his judgment to its dictates; and is not this in effect, Infidelity as real as that of openly denying the Divine origin and authority of the Old and New Testaments? The individual who professes to receive the Scriptures as a communication from God to man, divinely authen-

ticated, and yet resolves to hold opinions which are at war with the plain and obvious meaning of those Scriptures on every point of vital and essential importance, does nothing less than mock God, attempt to impose on the credulity of his fellow men, give the lie to his own acknowledged principles, and grievously sin against his own soul.

4. The Socinians further betray the Infidelity of their system, by maintaining the innocence of error. It is according to them of no consideration in a moral point of view what we believe. Opinions, they tell us, are harmless. A man will never be condemned nor accepted either for what he believes or disbelieves. A more unscriptural and dangerous position than this, it is, I conceive, not possible perhaps to advance. How does it appear, when contrasted with the following declarations from the only genuine and infallible standard of truth and duty? “But without faith it is impossible to please him, for he that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all them that diligently seek him.” “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” “In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love.” “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.” “He that believeth, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned.”* Now it must be the

* Hebrews xi. 6.—John ix. 35.—Gal. v. 6.—John viii. 24.
Mark xvi. 16.

truth that we are thus required imperiously to believe ; the truth of the Bible, of which Christ crucified is the great subject, and which is a connected harmonious system of doctrine opposed to error of every kind. And if salvation depend upon our belief of the truth, and our condemnation be, as is here affirmed, the result of disbelief, then the innocence of error is a sentiment which the word of God completely overturns. And does not reason itself do the same? Is not the soul the noblest part of our nature? Must not then the assent of the judgment, the acquiescence of the will, and the homage of all the mental powers in the cordial reception, and the firm, steady, and uniform belief of the truth, be a religious duty of the highest consideration? Is it not a great sin, to remain wilfully ignorant of what God has revealed for our instruction and salvation? And must it not be a sin of far higher aggravation, obstinately to adhere to opinions by which His truth is clearly and directly contradicted? Religious error must be of all things, the most dangerous. The innocence of it is, however, maintained in common by the Socinian and the Deist, a circumstance which proves their creeds to be substantially the same, and that reason is by none so outrageously perverted and abused, as by those who set it up as an infallible standard.

5. The promoters of Socinianism are also justly charged with virtual Infidelity, because they make repentance and mere morality the ground of acceptance

with God. They make these the basis of their hope for eternity. But all who do this, are really unbelievers, whatever they may profess to be. Revelation uniformly directs us to Jesus Christ, as the only true foundation of a sinner's hope of salvation and eternal life, and declares, that "other foundation can no man lay." In rejecting this foundation then, and substituting repentance and their own works in the place of Christ, the denomination which we have more immediately in view, virtually go over to the society and fellowship of the Deists.

In the Second place, Socinianism is a system of Infidelity in its general spirit. There is here a reference to the disposition of mind in which a fondness for it originates, by which a partiality for it is cherished and maintained, which also it has the reciprocal effect to foster and promote, and which a pertinacious adherence to it exemplifies.

1. It is a careless and trifling spirit. A frame of mind careless and trifling with respect to the holy, solemn, and infinitely important concerns of personal religion. It is not a spirit of deep and abiding concern for the salvation of the soul, and which leads a man to set about his salvation in earnest, regarding every other object as possessing comparatively no interest, no moment. It is not a spirit which prompts a man seriously to inquire within himself, whether he be born again, whether a clean heart be created in him and a right spirit be renewed within

him; whether he possess the Spirit of Christ; and, by virtue of the quickening influence derived from the Son of God, have become, in a religious sense, a new creature; whether his sins be pardoned, whether his soul be justified before God; in a word, whether he be prepared to die, to stand in judgment, and to enter upon eternity, so as to rise at last to endless bliss. It is not a disposition of mind which induces a person to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling," as the Apostle Paul exhorts, and to "give diligence to make his calling and election sure,"* according to the direction of another. No; it is, on the contrary, a spirit of lamentable indifference to these momentous questions, and to the sublime realities to which they direct the mind. But this indifference is an invariable characteristic of Infidelity in the persons of its advocates; and, I think, no man without prejudice can be at a loss for a moment to trace the resemblance in this particular between Deists and that body of people, the genius of whose theological system we are now investigating.

2. It is an over curious speculative spirit. Curiosity, when directed to its proper objects and kept within due bounds, is an interesting propensity of human nature, a laudable feeling, and a principle of the mind which may be productive of very happy consequences. But, in religion, it should be indulged only with the

* Phil. i. 12.—2 Peter i. 10.

greatest caution, and accompanied with the profoundest humility. David says in the 131st Psalm, "Lord, my heart is not haughty nor mine eyes lofty, neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." Such is the spirit of true religion, wherever it is found. Such is the spirit of genuine Christianity in whomsoever it exists. Hence Christ calls his disciples, babes. "I thank thee," says he, (speaking of the truths of the Gospel as made known to his followers,) "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." And he assures us, that "Except we be converted and become as little children," that is, humble and teachable as children, without aspiring at things beyond our capacity and above our comprehension, "we shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." But Socinianism betrays an unbridled curiosity in religion, an insatiable thirst for speculation on subjects in theology that are far above our reach; a roving and ever restless propensity to start difficult questions where God is silent, and to meddle with matters concerning which the Almighty has been pleased to give no information, and with which, therefore, it is

arrogant and presuming in us to occupy ourselves for a moment; an ungovernable anxiety to be wiser than our Creator intended to make us, instead of being pleased and satisfied with what it has been his sovereign will to reveal. And who does not know, that this sort of feeling distinguishes, in no ordinary degree, the generality of infidels? and that because Revelation does not encourage, but condemn it, they are offended at the Bible and despitefully reject it? And though the denomination, whose spirit we are now considering, have not proceeded to the same lengths, yet is not the similitude between them in this respect also marked and striking?

3. It is a proud and contemptuous spirit. What is it that leads Socinians to ascribe so much to their own understanding? What is it that prompts them to profess to believe in nothing but what they can comprehend? What is it that makes them arrogate to themselves the name of "Rational Christian?"

What is it that induces them to put on the affectation of pity for all those who entertain the doctrine of the union of two natures in Christ, as persons who are under a debility of mind, in this respect, however sensible and rational in others? What is it that influences them to call men of acknowledged talent, superior learning, and high respectability, "fanatics and enthusiasts," if they happen to be avowed friends and zealous promoters of evangelical principles and experimental religion? What is it that excites them

to pour compliments extravagantly upon one another, to speak of their own party as the wise and the learned, and of their opponents as the ignorant and illiterate, who are carried away by vulgar prejudices? But, above all, what is it that influences them to tax the sacred Writers with inconclusive reasoning, and to represent themselves as men of far greater compass of mind than they were, or than even Jesus Christ himself? Perhaps the last of these interrogations may be thought to imply what is exaggerated and incredible. "Charity that hopeth all things," may suggest to your thoughts, "surely no man who calls himself a Christian will dare to speak so arrogantly!" No wonder if you think so. Yet Dr. Priestly on Philosophical Necessity, writes as follows: "Not that I think that the sacred Writers were Necessarians, for they were not Philosophers, not even our Saviour himself, as far as appears: but their habitual devotion naturally led them to refer all things to God, without reflecting on the rigorous meaning of their language. And very probably, had they been interrogated," says he, "on the subject, they would have appeared not to be apprized of the Necessarian scheme, and would have answered in a manner unfavourable to it." The late venerable Fuller, speaking of this passage, says, "the sacred Writers, it seems, were well meaning persons; but, at the same time, so ignorant as not to know the meaning of their own language; yea, so ignorant, that had it been explained

to them, they would have been incapable of taking it in. Nor is this suggested of the sacred writers only, but, as it would seem, of Jesus Christ himself. A very fit person Jesus Christ must be indeed to be addressed, as knowing all things, as a revealer of the mind of God to man; to be called “the wisdom of God;” and “the light of the world;” to have it said of him, that “in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;” and to be “appointed to judge the world at the last day;” when, in fact, he was so ignorant as not to consider the meaning of his own language; or, if he had been interrogated upon it, would not have been apprized of the scheme to which his words naturally led, but would probably have answered in a manner unfavourable to it! Can men who thus speak and even write of Christ, be little in their own eyes?” Has not pride in them completed its climax? We all know that pride, arrogance, and presumption, are among the vital principles of Deism. But I will appeal to any man of cool and dispassionate reflection, whether the pride of Infidelity ever exceeded this. How different must have been the spirit under which the Apostle of the Gentiles wrote, when he styled himself the “chief of sinners,” “less than the least of all saints,” when he called himself “nothing!”* He had been exalted to the third heaven; he was favoured

* 1 Cor. i. 24.—John viii. 12.—Col. ii. 3.—2 Tim. iv. 1.
1 Tim. i. 15.—Eph. iii. 8.—2 Cor. xii. 11.

with the most extraordinary Revelations of the will and counsels of God, that were perhaps ever granted to any mere mortal; and he was in labours more abundant than any other of the Apostles. Yet he always seems as if he could not speak of himself in terms sufficiently humiliating, nor find language sufficiently elevated to describe the Divine glories and mediatorial excellencies of Jesus Christ. I wish every candid Socinian would take this circumstance into his serious consideration, and account, on rational principles, for the mighty contrast, in this respect, between Paul and Priestley, or any other master of the same school. The fact, my hearers, is, the Gospel of Christ teaches humility. The design of it, is to abase the pride of man, that "the loftiness of men," as the Prophet says, "may be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men be made low, and the Lord alone be exalted."* The great end of the Gospel is never answered, as it respects any man, till he is willing to place himself at the feet of Christ. Till he is willing to be nothing, that Christ Jesus may be all. This was verified in the Apostle, as his writings abundantly testify. But how far this is attained in those who seem as if they were determined to make Christ nothing and themselves all, I will leave you to judge, only asking, whether such men can justly be considered as having experienced any influence of the

* Isaiah ii. 11.

Gospel, or whether they are not as far from the spirit of the Gospel, as the east is from the west.

4. The spirit of Socinianism, it may be added, is bold and daring, and thus demonstrates its affinity to the genius of Deism. Its professors, it is true, have not proceeded to the same lengths of irreverence and profanity in their treatment of sacred things as some Infidels, but they follow hard after, and make it manifest, that the spirit which animates both, is the same in kind, and different only in degree. Socinians, like Infidels, applaud each other for the freedom with which they dare to discuss the contents of the Bible. Not to mention other instances which might be noticed, magnanimity has been ascribed to Dr. Priestley, (if I may be allowed again to introduce his name,) for having censured the Mosaic narrative of the fall of man, and dared to call it, a lame account. If this is to be magnanimous, let it be my lot to live and die a coward.

In the *Third* place, The general tendency of Socinianism characterizes it as a system of Infidelity.

1. It tends to produce a great want of reverence for the Scriptures. That such is its tendency, may have been perceived from what has been already stated, and enlargement may be here unnecessary. We may, however, stop a moment for the purpose of ascertaining what a very different feeling the Bible itself tends to excite, and will most assuredly be the means of promoting wherever it is duly regarded. A

very few passages will be amply sufficient to show us, that holy men of old, together with Christ himself, cherished a most ardent affection for the word of God, and held it in the highest veneration. "O how I love thy law!" says the royal Psalmist. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath for thy judgments at all times. Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." "Thy word," said the Prophet Jeremiah, "was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." Our Redeemer's command is, "search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." From an Apostle, we learn, "that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And in the Revelation of John, we read, "If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life."* From these and similar representa-

* Psalm cxix. 97.—Psalm cxix. 105—20—54—72.—Jer. xv. 16.
John v. 39.—2 Tim. iii. 16 & 17.—Rev. xxii. 18 & 19.

tions, we may be sure that a want of respect for the volume of inspiration, is a species of gross impiety ; that it is wholly inconsistent with the fear of God ; and that there can be no true religion, where the sacred writings are treated with deliberate and habitual irreverence.

2. Socinianism tends to annihilate serious reflection on the most important and interesting subjects, such as our forlorn and ruined condition as sinners, our entire need of a Saviour, conversion, true repentance, our real state and character in the sight of God, and the ground on which we are standing as candidates for eternity. According to this system, I need not concern myself about spiritual regeneration, for there is no such thing ; and if I am outwardly moral, all is well. It would persuade me, also, that there is no such being as the devil, and that the torments of hell are only temporary. Behold how Infidelity and Socinianism join hand in hand in a direct tendency to make men comparatively unconcerned about both their present and future interests ! how they both unite to say, “ peace, peace, where there is no peace ! ” *

3. It has a tendency to indispose the mind for devotion and purely spiritual exercises. Being a scheme of doctrine which depreciates Revelation, and gives unscriptural views of the Divine character, it must necessarily be unfavourable to intercourse with God in secret

* Ezekiel xiii. 10.

prayer, holy contemplation, thanksgiving, and a personal unreserved surrender of ourselves to him. The practice of carping at the plain doctrines of the Gospel, and a fondness for religious disputation, rather than for communion with God in sacred duties, are alike the characteristics of unbelievers and Socinians, and show how nearly they are allied.

4. It has no tendency to make the character spiritual. A person may adopt this system in all its essential branches, and be a perfectly consistent professor of it, and yet live and die a worldly-minded man, a thorough stranger to the benefits and joys of spiritual salvation. It has nothing in it to bring the mind to a religious perception and taste, to sanctify the heart, to wean the soul from earth, to devote the affections to celestial objects, and to form man for the society and employments of heaven, where saints and angels sing "worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and ascribe "blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever."*

In conclusion, I exhort you all, to make religion the chief business of life, even that religion which consists of prayer, faith, repentance, thanksgiving, hope, obedience, and joy. Beware, above all things, of resting content with a religion that consists only of speculation. Be solicitous to feel the power of sound

* Rev. v. 12 & 13.

religious principle with all its heavenly concomitants. Let nothing satisfy you but the religion of the heart. Acquaint yourselves truly with God in Christ. Cry to him earnestly and repeatedly for enlightening and renewing grace. Let it be deeply impressed on your hearts, that you are sinful, guilty, helpless, and unworthy. Then you will see that Christ, and none but Christ, can do you good. Repair to Christ without delay. Seek redemption for your souls through his blood, justification by his obedience, and eternal life at his hands. Without an interest in him, you are undone for ever. Let this consideration pierce your hearts. An interest in Christ is worth more to you than ten thousand worlds. Seek then to have him made unto you “wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”* Pray that you may be made willing to part with all for Christ. May the Holy Spirit incline us all to accept of this Divine and only Redeemer.—Amen.

* Cor. i. 30

LECTURE V.



SOCINIANISM UNPRODUCTIVE OF EVANGELICAL HOLINESS.

MATTHEW vii. 18.

“Neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.”

WE now enter on a distinct consideration of Socinianism, in its moral character and influence. If God employ it for the purpose of imparting to men sound religious principles, and promoting holiness of mind and conduct, then, doubtless, it is a doctrine from heaven. But if it be found to have no power to save from sin, and to bring the unholy near to God, in universal righteousness, that circumstance itself is evidence sufficient to prove that it is a system of falsehood. Let the native tendency of a doctrine and its genuine influence in a moral respect be once ascertained, and you need not be in a moment's uncertainty about the origin, good or bad, which you should ascribe

to it. "By their fruits shall ye know them," said the Divine Saviour; "a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit." We are not indeed to infer, that if a man have right opinions, he will of necessity be holy. We read of those, who "hold the truth in unrighteousness;"* and thousands of times the observation has been verified, that a person may have a sound creed, and yet himself be a slave of the vilest propensities, and guilty of the most iniquitous practices. Religious education, the faithful preaching of the gospel, or a course of evangelical reading and study is, any one of them, sufficient to give a man correct views of the gospel, considered as a system of opinions, by precisely the same natural process, that proper instruction will impart to the mind a competent knowledge of the theory of music, the rules of logic, the principles of mathematical demonstration, the laws of commercial intercourse, or the manner of working in any of the mechanical arts. At the very time, however, that the truth has become familiar to a man in theory, the gospel itself, considered as a message from God, may have no hold whatever on his heart, no place in his affections.

In which case, though the individual be orthodox as an Apostle, he may be as destitute of real holiness as Satan. For it is only when the truth is received in love, and for its own sake, as the word of the Most

* Matt. vii. 16.—Matt. vii. 18.—Rom. i. 18.

High, independent of all circumstances, and of all prejudices in favour of it, arising from education, or any other extraneous source, that it can realize its appropriate effects, in sanctifying the heart, and making the character truly spiritual and heavenly. Nor are we to suppose, on the other hand, that if a person have embraced wrong sentiments in religion, his outward character will of course be openly immoral and vicious. This is by no means a necessary consequence. Because, though error can never renew the mind or make actions good, yet many considerations wholly apart from the fear of God, or any other principle of genuine piety in the soul, may operate in exciting him who has adopted it, to cultivate virtues that adorn the mind, and to maintain with strict scrupulosity an external moral deportment.

These facts and observations shew us, that religion does not consist in notions only, even though they should be right; but in correct sentiments, accompanied by their legitimate effects in the mind and character of him, who is inwardly excited and effectually disposed by the influence of the Holy Spirit, to yield himself wholly up to their full and appropriate operation. They teach us also, that ungodliness does not consist merely of open and gross immorality; but in a great measure, if not chiefly, in a proud, unenlightened, unrenewed heart, which, together with the worst of principles and the most dangerous errors, may not unfrequently be found in

an individual, whose outward behaviour is on the whole unexceptionable, and even praise-worthy.

What I have advanced in the preceding remarks, does not invalidate, in the least, the principle which I premised this evening, as introductory to the present discussion—namely,—That Divine truth has a direct and unchanging tendency to make men truly alive to the fear, the love, the service, and the enjoyment of God; and that any system of doctrine, which has not Scriptural holiness for its natural and invariable effect, is condemned of itself, as being proved by that very deficiency, to be a tissue of lies unworthy alike of God to communicate, or of his rational creatures to receive.

Let us, *First*, examine the nature of evangelical Holiness;

Secondly, shew that Socinianism is wholly inadequate to its production;

And *Thirdly*, that they are morally incapable of existing together.

We are to examine the nature of evangelical holiness. Evangelical holiness, is that sanctity of heart and that purity of conduct, whose indispensable necessity the gospel asserts, whose several properties the gospel describes, whose attainment the gospel enjoins, the possession of which, the gospel is a chief means of communicating, and the happy consequences of which, the gospel sets forth in those animated and exalted representations, which it gives of the future blessedness

and eternal, unspeakable glory of the righteous.

1. It includes a serious concern about our own salvation, together with effectual convictions of our guilt, unworthiness, and utter inability to deliver ourselves from sin and misery.

If we take the Apostle Paul for an example of this holiness, we shall see the truth of the foregoing statement firmly established. How lively was the concern he felt for the salvation of his soul, and how great his solicitude that he might not come short of it! "I therefore run," says he, "not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ and be found in him." "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." How deep also was the Apostle's sense of his own unworthiness! "It is a faithful saying," says he, "and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." "I am the least of the Apostles, that am not meet to be called an Apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."* "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is

* 1 Cor. ix. 26.—Phil. iii. 8.—Phil. iii. 13.—1 Tim. i. 5.
1 Cor. xv. 9.

this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." Nor was the consciousness which this distinguished believer had of his own spiritual helplessness and entire dependence on his Lord and Master, less remarkable. "In me," he declares, "that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." "I will glory in mine infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God." "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace which was bestowed upon me, was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."* A truly humble spirit, and an ever earnest solicitude about our spiritual and eternal interests, is the only soil in which the plant of Gospel holiness will grow and flourish, until, arriving at maturity, it be transplanted from earth to heaven, to bear the full ripe fruit of perfect knowledge, perfect love, and perfect purity in the garden of paradise above. The Apostle of the Gentiles was a first rate saint, because he felt more strongly than many, the importance of salvation, and was humble before God in no ordinary degree.

2. The holiness required in the Gospel, includes a cheerful acquiescence in the way of salvation by Jesus Christ alone, accompanied by sincere and devout

* Rom. vii. 18.—2 Cor. xii. 5.—2 Cor. iii. 5.
1 Cor. 15. 10.

application to Christ and by dependence on him for his mercy and benefits. This is very evident from the writings of the Prophets and Apostles, and also from the records of the Evangelists. "Behold," says Jehovah, by the mouth of the Prophet Isaiah, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste"—shall not be surprised or alarmed with the apprehension of danger, shall not be confounded or overtaken by destruction, but shall dwell in perfect peace and safety. This foundation is Christ Jesus, upon whom we are to build all our hopes for eternity. It is "the rock against which the gates of hell shall not prevail." In the second Psalm, we read, "kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." "This is my beloved Son," said the voice from the excellent glory, at the Redeemer's transfiguration, "in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him:" receive his message, obey his authority, and approve of him as the divinely appointed Mediator and Saviour of sinners from the wrath to come. "I am the way," says the Saviour, "the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." "Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me."* "Lord, to

* Isaiah xxviii. 16.—Matt. xvi. 18.—Psalm ii. 12.—
Matt. xvii. 5.—John xiv. 6.—Matt. xi. 6.

whom shall we go," exclaims the Apostle Peter to Christ, "thou hast the words of eternal life," And in the second chapter of his first Epistle, he writes, "To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, ye, also, as lively stones are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." A thankful acceptance of Christ as the only Saviour, and personal application to him for an interest in his cleansing blood and healing grace, are duties to which, perhaps, above all others, we are directed, encouraged, or exhorted in the New Testament. We are assured, that "except we eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, we have no life in us," no spiritual life; that "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can we, except we abide in him." Every weary and heavy laden sinner is bid to come to him, and is assured of a kind reception, by the unqualified declaration, that "him that cometh" the gracious Redeemer "will in no wise cast out," The command is "to cleave unto the Lord," the Lord Christ, "with full purpose of heart;" "to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus;" "to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."* An Evangelist affirms, that

* John vi. 68.—1 Peter ii. 4.—John vi. 53.—John xv. 4.
John vi. 37.—Acts xi. 23.—2 Tim. ii. 1.—Heb. xii. 1.

“out of his fulness we all receive and grace for grace;” and the life which an Apostle “lived in the flesh, was by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave himself for him.”* The holiness which the New Testament teaches, can be learned only at the foot of the cross. Believing views of Christ, as our bleeding, atoning sacrifice, and our efficacious sanctifier, have the greatest power to destroy the love of sin, to break the force of temptation, to divest the world of its deceitful charms, to fill the mind with divine peace and delightful contemplation of God, and to inspire with new life and vigour, every holy principle, every gracious affection.

3. True repentance is included in the nature of that holiness which we call evangelical. Though no man is saved for repentance, or on account of any thing meritorious in it, yet no man can be saved without repentance, as a moral quality, which is itself an essential part of that salvation which sinners obtain from Christ alone. Repentance is sorrow for sin *because* we have offended and dishonoured God by it. It is self-loathing on account of our own unrighteousness in heart and life. It is a disposition to acknowledge our transgressions with deep humility, with inward contrition, and with genuine personal abasement before the Lord. It is a sincere desire to be delivered from all our iniquities, an actual departure from the indulgence

* John i. 16.—Gal. ii. 20.

and practice of every thing that we know to be displeasing to the Almighty, and an entire turning unto God for mercy and life eternal. Repentance is much insisted on in the sacred Scriptures; it is peculiar to the regenerate, and is an invariable feature in the character of true believers. It is often confounded with mere external reformation, unconnected with any change of heart or true humility of mind; a reformation which is ignorantly and vainly put as a ground of acceptance with God, in the place of Jesus Christ and his precious blood. But such reformation, however exact, is not saving repentance. It is self-righteousness, equally dishonourable to Christ, unacceptable to God, and ruinous to the soul. True repentance springs from right views of the evil of sin; it fills the mind with grief and shame—it leads to utter renunciation of trust in our own righteousness, and makes Christ and salvation by him fully welcome to the soul.

4. The holiness that is evangelical, comprehends supreme love to God, and active obedience to his revealed will. We are altogether unholy till our affections are sanctified to love God above every thing. We have not a particle of holiness, till this sacred feeling become in our minds the predominant disposition. Then alone we are freed from the bondage of sin, when we feel a warm and strong attachment to God in Christ; when we set our very heart and soul upon him as the chief eternal good. The following

passages of Scripture, descriptive of this grace, you will recollect: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." "Now remain faith, hope, and charity, or love: but the greatest of these is love." "That ye may be rooted and grounded in love." "The love of Christ constraineth us." "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." "Keep yourselves in the love of God." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema maranatha." "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." "The fruit of the spirit is love." "We love him, because he first loved us." "If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." "Love not the world neither the things of the world." "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength."* This love is an active principle and leads to obedience.

" 'Tis this that makes our cheerful feet

" In swift obedience move;

" The devils know and tremble too,

But Satan cannot love."

* Rom, xiii. 10.—1 Cor. xiii. 13.—Eph. iii. 17.—2 Cor. v. 14. Rom. v. 5.—Jude v. 21.—1 Cor. xvi. 22.—Eph. vi. 24. John xxi. 17.—Gal. v. 22.—1 John iv. 19.—1 John ii. 15. Matt. x. 27.—Deut. vi. 5.

“If a man love me,” says our Lord, “he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.”

5. Evangelical holiness includes the enjoyment of communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The believer “lives as seeing him who is invisible.” “He is reconciled to God by faith in his Son.” “He is made nigh by the blood of Christ,” and is “sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.”* He offers his supplications in the name of Christ, aided by the influence of the Spirit. He admires and adores the infinite love of God, in the gift of his Son. He trusts the infinite merit of Christ the Mediator, and finding righteousness and strength in him alone, he glories only in his cross. He gives sacred praise to the Divine Spirit, who had compassion on him in his ignorance, removed the veil of darkness from his understanding, and led him to Christ, in whom he found life, and peace, and joy. He acknowledges God in all his ways. He aims at glorifying God in all that he does. Whatever happens to him, he considers as done or permitted by his heavenly Father for wise and gracious purposes. He submits to the will of God in affliction, and enjoys the presence of Christ in every tribulation. He is thankful for every mercy in prosperity, but rejoices most of all that Christ is his portion. He is solicitous

* John xiv. 23.—Heb. xi, 27.—Eph. ii, 13.—1 Cor. vi. 11.

not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom he is sealed to the day of redemption, lest he should lose his comforting presence, and be left destitute of his Divine help and effectual blessing. In prayer and praise, in reading and hearing the word of God, in pious meditation, and even in the conduct and business of life, he has fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Ghost. In spiritual and heavenly comfort, in a pious frame, in joyful expectation, and exulting triumph, interrupted indeed by the sins and sorrows incident to the present imperfect state, he waits "all the days of his appointed time on earth till his change come." The account which I have given of evangelical holiness in this last mentioned feature of it, is abundantly verified by the word of God. "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy: I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also, that is of a contrite and humble spirit; to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." "Know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory." "My heart and flesh faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever." "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee!"*

* Job xiv. 14.—Isaiah lvii. 15.—1 Cor. iii. 16.—
Eph. iii. 17.—Psalm lxxiii. 24, 26, & 25.

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if needs be, ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, whom, having not seen, ye love, and in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” “Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound—they shall walk, O Lord! in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all the day, and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.”*

From this view of evangelical holiness, we see that it is very different, nay, essentially distinct from mere morality. Though many by a sad mistake, consider the latter as comprehending every thing included in holiness. There cannot be holiness without morality, but there may be morality without holiness. A man's life may be moral, at the same time that his judgment is perverted by error; his heart enslaved by prejudices against the truth, and enmity against God; and his mind full of pride, self-sufficiency, and love of the world. But a man cannot be holy till his understanding is enlightened from above, till his prejudices against the Gospel are subdued, till his pride is abased, and his desires and affections are made truly spiritual. Then he will “have his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”

* 1 Peter i. 6—8.—Psalm lxxxix. 15.

In the *Second* place, It is now time that I should proceed, as was first proposed, to shew, that Socinianism is unproductive of evangelical Holiness.

1. The *Doctrines* of Socinianism cannot produce it, for they are *not Scriptural* doctrines. They form a system of tenets at war with the Bible, and the Bible is at war with them; consequently they can never answer the grand moral purposes for which the Scriptures were given, and to promote which they are so eminently profitable for instruction and encouragement—steadfastness and uniformity in every principle of inward piety, and every branch of active goodness. They are not doctrines which *enlighten the mind*. They assume indeed to impart superior light and information; but so far are they in fact from doing this, that they throw obscurity, confusion, and even *thick darkness* over the whole scheme of revealed truth. They keep the mind in a state of blindness in things relating to Christ. They hide from view all his divine, essential, and saving glories. They keep out of sight the moral corruption which sin has imparted to human nature and they shut the eyes to the chief and distinguishing excellencies of the Gospel. They are *not humbling doctrines*. They rather tend to foster a proud and supercilious conceit of our own sufficiency and excellence. They do not hide pride from man, but form a soil most congenial to the vanity of the human heart, and in which it takes the deepest root. Instead of laying before man his

deep and aggravated guilt, letting him know that he is a sinner, needy, helpless, and utterly unworthy of every thing but punishment and death, and faithfully pointing out his danger ; they hush the cry of danger, they stifle the conviction of conscience, they amuse the mind with high notions of the strength and adequacy of its reasoning powers, and they build up the soul in vain self-righteous confidence. They are not *consoling doctrines*. They do not, nor can they, administer any comfort to one whose mind is wounded by a sense of sin, whose heart is broken and contrite before God, under a due feeling of his misery and desert as a transgressor. If a man, truly awakened to see his guilty state and made sensible of sin, should cry out, "what must I do to be saved?"* Socinianism would tell him to go into cheerful company, to betake himself to the innocent diversions, as they are called, and gay amusements of life. It would prescribe to him the pleasures of the play-house, it would tell him not to give way to gloomy fear, and foreboding melancholy, that his nervous system was out of order, that he must seek relief from his anxieties in fashionable recreations, and especially give up all thoughts of death, hell, and damnation, and such subjects. This is the manner in which the doctrines of the Socinian scheme would be employed to assuage the grief, and heal the wounds of him whose mind is employed and suitably

* Acts xvi. 30.

affected with the most salutary concern, and the most rational solicitude respecting his real state in the sight of God, and his future eternal happiness. They would make him believe that there is no sufficient cause for all this anxiety, they would conceal from his sight the infinite moment of those matters which occasion it, and, persuading him to give himself up to forgetfulness of those things and carnal presumptuous security, they would induce him to put far off the evil day. But miserable comforters are these to a man, when the terrors of God are upon his conscience, when he is so made to see and feel that God is *just* as well as merciful, that he cannot lose sight of the solemn truth. In these circumstances, nothing can bring satisfaction to the mind, and pour into the soul the healing balm of consolation, but the pure unadulterated Gospel of Christ, which testifies that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin;" which in cheering and delightful accents says: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*

The doctrines in question, I observe lastly, are not *life-giving doctrines*. They do not call the dead to life, I mean those "dead in trespasses and sins."

* 1 John i. 7.—Acts xvi. 31.—John i. 29.—Matt. xi. 28.

As they make no mention of the moral death of the soul and the need which it has of the quickening influence of Divine grace, but rather flatter the sinner into an opinion that he is alive while he is dead ; so they are never the means of communicating to the mind the principles, the acts, and the energies of spiritual animation, of new and heavenly life. These doctrines, then, being unscriptural, having no power truly to enlighten, possessing no humbling efficacy, being unable to comfort, and without energy to make man spiritually alive, will always leave the soul dark, cold, insensible, unfruitful, inactive, and lifeless with respect to spiritual things, estranged from true sanctification ; nay, at an unspeakable distance from Gospel holiness. Permit me here to address you in the words of a late judicious and highly esteemed writer. “ As you would maintain the fear and love of your Maker, a tender conscience, solid peace of mind, comfort in death, or a cheerful prospect of being ever with the Lord, be on your guard against the influence of the pretended miscalled rational scheme, which denieth the Lord who bought you ; for in proportion as you imbibe these notions, that man is not born in sin ; that Christ is not a Divine Saviour ; that God can dispense with the breach of his Law without an adequate satisfaction, etc., your soul will be withered, your prayers lifeless and unfrequent, your zeal abated, your conformity to the lawless world increased. Instead of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, a secret pride

and a sceptical humour will take place. To all this will succeed a contemptuous disdain of the most serious Christians, founded on the idea of your superior attainments, or, at least, on the unscriptural fancy that all men will be saved at last, however they act here. To do all to the glory of God, to glory in the cross of Christ, to spend and to be spent in his service, and to exhort your neighbours against the deceitfulness of sin and sinful error, will be your strange work and the aversion of your soul. From which evils, come they from what quarter they may, the Lord deliver you."

2. The *preaching* of Socinianism cannot produce the holiness which is evangelical. It is preaching altogether anti-evangelical, and cannot, therefore, be expected to bring sinners to repentance, to establish them in religious principles, or to lead them on in the ways of true Christian obedience. It is not faithful preaching. It is not preaching, the aim of which is, to declare the whole counsel of God, the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, in which men are told plainly of their sins, apprized of their condition, warned of the misery that awaits the finally impenitent beyond the grave, and directed to Christ, the only author of deliverance from it. It is not preaching that searches and probes the heart to the very bottom, detecting and bringing to open daylight the hidden evils that lurk within, pride, hardness of heart, forgetfulness of God, secret enmity against him, worldly-mindedness, and carnal affections. It is not

preaching addressed to the conscience, that, to use a homely expression, turns a man inside out, that makes persons out of love with themselves, that causes people to feel uncomfortable in their sins and in an unconverted state, that introduces to the mind serious reflection, that sets a man on examining himself, that brings him to his knees in fervent prayer, that causes the heart to feel its vileness, and the tears of repentance to flow at the feet of Divine mercy. It is rather what has not unfitly been called silver-tongued, velvet-mouthed preaching, which makes men pleased with themselves ; nay, which causes them to think very highly of themselves, which flatters their pride and does little violence to their lusts,—preaching in which the audience are often entertained with pretty descriptions of virtue, intermingled with representations of the odious nature of vice, and drawn up, perhaps, in a style of composition so pure and classical, as is captivating to a fine ear and an elegant taste, but wholly devoid of faithful application, and in which the overwhelming charge, “Thou art the man,”* is never made to reach the heart. Preaching in which, not unfrequently, the eternal interests of the hearers are trifled with, by time spent in laboured, far fetched, and, apparently learned criticisms, emptying the text, perhaps, of its plain and obvious meaning, or divesting the Gospel of all its glory. Such was not the

* 2 Sam. xii. 7.

preaching of the Apostles, which converted thousands in a day ; the effects of which spread like lightning through the Roman empire, in every province bringing multitudes to Christ, men and women, Jews and Gentiles. Nor was this the manner of preaching practised by the venerable reformers from popery, or by those illustrious men of more recent times, the Whitfields, the Wesleys, the Romaines, the Berridges, and the Grimshaws of our own country. When those men preached, sinners were pricked in the heart, and they cried, "Men and brethren what must we do?" Sabbath breakers, profane swearers, drunkards, and profligates of every description were "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, received the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith which is in Christ."* But the preaching of Socinianism will never have any other effect, than, while it gratifies a fastidious imagination and teaches bare morality, to harden the heart in wicked prejudices against the Saviour, to stupify the conscience, to lull men asleep on the brink of everlasting ruin, and to send them into eternity with a lie in their right hands. Nor will it ever much promote even the outward profession of religion. The late Mr. Fuller, in his Calvinistic and Socinian systems compared, says, "Though Socinianism may gain ground among speculating individuals, yet the congregations

* Acts xxvi. 18.

where that system, or what bears a near resemblance to it, is taught, are greatly upon the decline. There are at this time a great many places of worship in this kingdom, especially, among the Presbyterians and the general Baptists, where the Socinian and Arian doctrines have been taught, till the congregations are gradually dwindled away, and there are scarcely a sufficient number left to keep up the form of worship. There is nothing in either of these systems, comparatively speaking, that alarms the conscience or interests the heart ; and, therefore, where they are taught, the congregations, unless kept up by the accidental popularity of a preacher, or some other circumstance distinct from the doctrine delivered, generally fall into decay." In Bogue and Bennet's History of Dissenters, we have the following affecting relation : " It is instructive," they say, " though painful to remark, that while he (that is, Dr. Benson) and Dr. Lardner were writing very learned books and gaining extensive fame, the congregation was gradually diminishing, till it was scarcely entitled to the name ; and having received the deadly poison from their lips, after a precarious existence of twelve years under Dr. Price, Mr. Radcliffe, and Dr. Calder, it became extinct. Some time afterwards, the meeting-house was opened by Wm. Alldridge, a Calvinistic Methodist from Lady Huntingdon's college at Trevecca, when the faith of the ancient nonconformists which had sounded so clearly and powerfully from Mr. Cruso

fourscore years before, and which had not been heard within the walls since the decease of Dr. Harris, being now declared again, the place was filled anew with attentive and serious hearers."

In the *Third* place, It is further proposed to be shewn, that Socinianism and evangelical holiness are morally incapable of existing together. This, I think, will appear to every candid mind, if, in judging of this matter, the following considerations be permitted to have their due weight.

1. Socinianism denies the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit on the minds of men, which Divine internal spiritual operation is, according to the Scriptures, the only sufficient cause of Christian holiness. The Redeemer declares in the most solemn manner, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"* that is, he can neither discern the true nature and excellence of that kingdom, nor be morally capable of enjoying its privileges. Language cannot be stronger than this, in asserting the absolute necessity of being born again, born in a spiritual sense, in order to our being partakers of Gospel holiness. But this regeneration is expressly and frequently ascribed to the Spirit as its efficient Author. Christ himself says, "except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." "The wind bloweth where it listeth," he adds, "and thou

* John iii. 3—5—8.

hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” A man cannot, therefore, be holy without the renewing of the Holy Ghost. But if a person has experienced the sanctifying agency of the Spirit, he will not deny in the face of so much Scripture testimony on the subject, that there is such a thing as his sacred influence on the minds of sinners. He will be sensible of it, and devoutly and thankfully acknowledge it. The existence of it, however, is denied by Socinianism. I leave you to infer the consequence.

2. It is morally impossible that Socinianism and the holiness of the Gospel should exist together, because the former essentially lowers the only true and genuine standard of the latter. The only proper standard of Christian purity is the word of God. In this we learn, that holiness has its beginning in a moral change of disposition, called in Scripture, “the circumcision of the heart, the renewing of the mind, the taking away of the stony heart out of the flesh, and the giving of an heart of flesh.” “God’s putting his law in our inward parts, and writing it in our hearts.”* We are further taught by this unvarying rule, that holiness consists in hatred of all sin, in love to divine things, chiefly the Divine name and every part of the Divine will, in sincere and earnest desires

* John iii. 8.—Ezek. xi. 19.—Jer. xxxi. 33.

after God, in admiration of Christ, and trust in him for life eternal, in delight in spiritual exercises, in a concern and endeavour to please the Lord in all things, in walking as Christ also walked, in adorning the Gospel by a consistent profession of it, in gratitude to Jesus for his saving mercy, his peace-speaking blood, his rich and efficacious grace, and all the proofs of his unchanging love, in heavenly-mindedness, in joyful hope, in victory over the world, and in manfully opposing our spiritual foes, and pressing on to the kingdom of glory.

But Socinians have set up another standard of holiness, which, when tried by the word of God, is essentially defective. It is formed of their own meagre conceptions of what is right and wrong, and the opinions of their fellow creatures. Instead of insisting on internal sanctity, on holy affections and pious dispositions, they will tell you, that you are as good as you need be, if you maintain a course of actions, just correct enough to make you decent, and respectable in the eyes of men. A great portion of what the Bible requires as necessarily included in evangelical principles, Socinians deride as foolish prejudice and silly enthusiasm. Their conduct in this, however, does not alter the essential nature of holiness ; that remains the same and unalterable. All which, makes it clear as the light of the sun, that while they thus depreciate the standard of spiritual character and action, they must be destitute of the moral qualities which that standard requires.

3. It is morally impossible that the Socinian creed and true Christian holiness should exist together, because the principal motives and the strongest inducements to the latter are, by the former, taken away. The best and the most powerful motives to a holy life urged upon us in the Gospel, are derived from the wonderful love of God in the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ, and the amazing condescension and grace of Christ in becoming incarnate; from the design of his death as an atonement for sin, that he might deliver us from iniquity and save us from destruction; from the abundant mercy manifested in our effectual calling; from the rich promises of the Gospel; and from the well grounded hope of heaven as the free gift of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. But the moment you enter the Socinian school, all those noble and animating motives vanish, and consequently that gratitude, that self-denial, that abstraction from the world, that zeal for Christ, that willingness to suffer for him as well as to obey him, that active devotedness to God which they are so well adapted to promote, and which form so many constituent parts of evangelical righteousness, must vanish with them.

4. I remark, that it is morally impossible that this scheme of doctrine and evangelical holiness should exist together, because the former refuses to acknowledge and contemptuously disavows the only proper reference of the latter.

The holiness which the Gospel prescribes has respect alike to Jehovah, the Father, and the Lord Jesus

Christ, and to the Divine eternal Spirit, distinct in personality, but one in infinite perfection and glory. Where Christ is not adored and his name loved above all created good, and where the Holy Spirit is not revered and worshipped, there ignorance of God and unbelief of his word appear, but Scripture holiness is, and must be, unknown. A man cannot refuse Divine honour to the Son and the Spirit, without contemning the authority of the Father himself. It is the revealed will of God, that "men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father;" and we are told that "he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him."* There can, then, be no vital holiness in a profession of Socinianism, for instead of honouring all the Divine persons with appropriate affections, praises, and obedience, it blasphemes the Son, robs the Holy Spirit of his honours, and, in so doing, rebels against the will and pleasure of the Father.

My dear hearers, before I conclude, I remind you of the importance and necessity of that holiness, the nature of which has this evening been laid before you. By nature you are wholly destitute of it, and you can attain it, and make progress in it, only by grace. Nothing can produce it in you but the Divine power of the Spirit of God. Examine the sacred pages of the Bible on the subject yourselves, and see whether what you have heard be agreeable to the word of inspi-

* John v. 23.

ration. If the representation of Christian holiness set before you in this Lecture be according to the Scriptures, remember that the possession of that holiness is absolutely necessary to your salvation ; “without it no man shall see the Lord.” What think ye of sin ? Do you see its awful enormity, its dreadful evil, and its terrible desert ? Do you feel yourselves infected with its destructive contagion ? Do you find yourselves overspread with its foul and loathsome leprosy ? Jesus Christ can make you clean, and he can give you perfect soundness. There is virtue in his blood to cleanse the vilest, and his Spirit can purify from all unrighteousness. He alone can cure you of the disease of sin, and heal your souls of all their spiritual maladies. Flee then to him without delay ; he is ready to receive you, and you will be welcomed by him. Are you in love with that fatal system which denies the Divinity of the Son and the Spirit ? As you value your souls and regard the honour of God, instantly renounce it. While you cherish it you cannot be holy. You may be moral, but you cannot truly know, fear, love, enjoy, and acceptably obey the Almighty. But till you are holy you cannot be saved. Renounce this dangerous error, then, for ever, for there is death in it, eternal death. You cannot go to heaven, you cannot enter on eternal life, till Christ be all and in all in your esteem. Seek the Lord by prayer, entreating him to open the eyes of your understanding ; choose his favour before every

thing else. Prize Christ Jesus as your best portion. Set your hearts upon him. Give your whole souls to him, for “he is worthy;” and, adoring his infinite excellencies, and staying yourselves on his Almighty arm, live unto holiness, and expect life everlasting:—
AMEN.

LECTURE VI.



THE DEVOTIONS OF SOCINIANISM NOT CHRISTIAN
WORSHIP.

JOHN v. 23.

*“He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the
Father who hath sent him.”*

THE worship of God is an exercise at once sacred and sublime. It is the first duty of rational dependent beings. It is the delight of all holy intelligences human and angelic, and destined to be their blissful employ for ever. Correct views of Divine worship are in the highest degree important. Without such views we cannot worship God aright; and if we worship him improperly, our religious exercises must be unacceptable. No creature is at liberty to choose for himself how or on what principles he will worship the Almighty. In performing this duty, we should proceed, from first to last, according to Divine direction.

Revelation alone, can teach us how to worship God. To communicate instruction respecting this part of our duty, is one great purpose for which the sacred volume is granted. In this interesting branch of religion, as well as in others, we can attend to no other guide with safety. Not to follow this guide is to wander from the right way, and to consult any other authority is to exclude the light of heaven and to set up an oracle for ourselves, in preference to that wisdom which cometh from above.

From Revelation we learn, that to worship God in a right manner, we must have proper conceptions of his character ; our religious sentiments, so far as they are formed, must accord, in substance at least, with his truth, and we must approach him with corresponding emotions. Unaccompanied with such conceptions, such sentiments, and such emotions, our devotional services, instead of being pleasing to God, will incur his displeasure, as a species of rebellion originating in indifference to his word, and betraying a disregard of his authority. With respect to such services, we could not expect him to view us with approbation, but might rather apprehend that he would address us as he did Israel of old, when he said, “ who hath required this at your hand ? ”

We have already considered Socinianism as a class of tenets nearly all of them opposed to the Bible—as a religious creed unsupported by sound reason—as a system of opinions bearing a strong and prominent

resemblance to infidelity—and as a scheme of theology unfavourable to holiness. It seems also not foreign to the course of our investigations to consider it in its bearings on the worship of God; and we affirm that the devotions of Socinianism are not Christian worship. Let us see whether this position is not susceptible of clear and abundant proof.

First the object; and, *Secondly*, the manner of Christian worship may be considered.

In the *First* place, The appropriate object of Christian worship is God alone. “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and him only shalt thou serve.”* To worship in a religious manner any being in the universe but God is idolatry, according to the unvarying language of both the Old and New Testament, and is equally prohibited and condemned by the regulations and laws of the Jewish religion and the Christian. He alone is entitled to religious homage who possesses Divine perfection. To God alone, therefore, the creature ought to address himself with pious feelings in the exercises of devotion.

Socinians yield an unqualified assent to this principle; and in this reasoning they fully acquiesce. How then can they be considered as lying open to the charge of anti-christian worship? This charge is, I conceive, justly brought against them, because they refuse to worship the Son and the Holy Spirit, who,

* Matt. iv. 10.

according to the Scriptures, are truly and properly God, while they appropriate the honours of adoration to the Father only.

If words are the proper means of communicating ideas, and if we are to form our notions of God according to the language of inspiration, it is incontrovertible, from the manner in which the Bible speaks of the Son and the Holy Spirit, that to them belongs essential Divinity in common with the Father. Not that the Deity is divided. No. The Godhead is one. But the Divine nature is possessed indivisibly by the ever blessed Three. In one respect, the unity being that of essence or nature; in another, the plurality, that of personal subsistence or distinction. On a subject confessedly incomprehensible to finite beings, it may, perhaps, be necessary to say so much, because Socinians, in speaking of the faith of Trinitarians, often represent them as maintaining that God is one and three in the same respect, conscious, as it would seem, that on no other ground they can charge us with believing a contradiction. But Socinians cannot need to be informed that we entertain no such opinion. We altogether disclaim the notion that God is one and three in the same respect, as a palpable absurdity. It is no more our opinion than it is theirs. Nor can the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity, as we maintain it, be shewn to involve any contradiction, as I conceive, except by an entire misrepresentation of our sentiments.

If then the Son and the Holy Spirit are equal with the Father in Divine nature and glory, it must be our duty to worship them equally with the Father. Socinians of modern times, however, in accordance with their belief that the Father exclusively is God, say that he only is the proper object of religious worship. But what have they to offer in proof of this assertion? Are we any where in Scripture forbid to worship the Son and the Holy Spirit? Does the sacred volume, in any part of it, require us to worship the Father only? If there be any passages either prohibiting the former or commanding the latter, I am as yet wholly unacquainted with them. We do indeed read, that “the Father seeketh *such* to worship him, as worship him in spirit and in truth.” But this neither forbids us to worship the Son or the Spirit, nor requires us to worship the Father exclusively. It only proves that the Father is the proper, not the exclusive, object of worship. The Apostle says, that “through him,” that is Christ, “we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”* Perhaps a Socinian would say, that this passage clearly and evidently teaches, that we should worship the Father only, inasmuch as it mentions none but him to whom we have the privilege of access. Thus, however, to explain the Apostle’s words, would be to extort from them a meaning which they do not convey. They plainly

* John iv. 21.—Ephes. ii. 18.

shew, that we ought to worship the Father; but they do not even imply that we ought to worship him only. To establish such an hypothesis, a very different mode of expression would be necessary. In this text, the Apostle is not considering the object of worship. As the context shows, he is describing the way in which believers, both Jews and Gentiles, find acceptance with the Almighty, a subject which naturally introduces the mediation of Christ, and as, in the arrangement of mediation, the Father occupies the place of Deity, as the Son is appointed to be the medium of intercourse between God, infinitely holy, and man, a guilty polluted creature, and as the Holy Spirit's office is to bring us near to God by his renewing influence, it is natural, when our acceptance with heaven is the topic of consideration, to speak as the Apostle here does of the Father, not exclusively, but economically, as the object of our religious addresses, of the Son as the Person in whose name we present ourselves before the Divine Majesty, and of the Holy Spirit as the Agent whose gracious and effectual operations excite and enable us to approach him acceptably.

It is, if I mistake not, common with Socinians to allege in defence of the exclusive worship of the Father, the precept which has been already quoted, namely,—“thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” But to adduce this passage for such a purpose is plainly begging the question. It is taking for granted what, as I conceive,

is not proved, and what I think it is impossible to prove, namely, that none but the Father is God ; and then reasoning accordingly, a mode of ratiocination altogether untenable. When once it is clearly proved that the Father only is Jehovah, then, and not before, the argument derived from the Scripture doctrine of the worship of one God, will be of essential service to the cause for the support of which it is adduced. The Scripture precept, that we should worship the Lord our God, and him only, is, in my opinion, completely subversive of the hypothesis that sacred homage should be paid to none but the Father. For the Bible, as I think, evidently and abundantly inculcating the proper Deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, this precept, while it prohibits the worship of idols, necessarily obliges us to worship those Divine Persons, as clearly and strongly as it binds us to worship the Father. If the Scripture teaches that not the Father only but that Christ also and the Holy Ghost are God, (which to me appears as certain as it is that it contains the doctrine of the Divine unity,) then this view of the passage in question is not only correct, but any other view of it is unquestionably erroneous.

If Socinians will produce a single text of Scripture, teaching either by express assertion, or by clear and natural inference, that the Father only is God, or that he only is to be worshipped, I will resign the point in debate at once ; and I may no doubt promise as much for every candid and unprejudiced Trinitarian.

Revelation must be consistent with itself in every thing. Accordingly as it applies to the Son and the Holy Spirit the names, and ascribes to them the perfections and works, of Jehovah, so likewise they are represented as honoured and entitled to be honoured with Divine worship. Of the truth of this position, the following Scriptures exhibit, in my opinion, completely decisive evidence.

John xv. 5. "Without me ye can do nothing"—compared with Phil. iv. 13. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me," and with 2 Tim. ii. 1. "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Surely he, without whose aid we can do nothing that is spiritual, whose power strengthens us for every duty, and in whose grace we are exhorted to be strong, is entitled in all things to our religious dependence, and consequently to our adoration.

Luke xxiii. 42. "And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom." Here the state of the blessed after death is called the kingdom of Christ, and by a dying suppliant, whose prayer, we learn from the following verse was accepted, a solemn petition for admission into it is offered to Christ as the Lord of that kingdom. If this is not worship, would it not be difficult to say what is?

Acts vii. 59, "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

Our translation weakens the force of this passage, by supplying the words "upon God" after "calling." If an additional word were necessary in our version to convey the sense of the original, "Jesus" or "Christ," would be most proper. But, perhaps, no such word is required. The passage is perspicuous, and the sense entire of itself. "And they stoned Stephen, calling" or invoking, "and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Here is an eminent primitive believer addressing himself in his dying moments, in solemn invocation, to the Son of God, resigning his soul into the hands of Jesus, and presenting to him the last prayer, the last words he uttered on earth, namely, a petition, for the pardon of his murderers.

Rom. x. 13. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Lord here, as the preceding context shews, is Christ. To him then, we are to direct that prayer which has salvation for its object, and with which salvation is, according to this passage, universally connected.

1 Cor. i. 2. "To them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." We learn from this verse, that to call upon or invoke the name of Christ in a religious manner was the general practice of the primitive church.

2 Cor. xii. 8 & 9. "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said

unto me, "my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength (or power) is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmity that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Our translation has thrown a little obscurity over this passage. When the Apostle speaks of the *power* of Christ resting upon him, he employs the *same word* that was employed in the answer to his petition, which proves, if words can prove any thing, that the *Lord* whom he besought in the exercise of prayer, was *Christ*, his adorable Master.

2 Thess. ii. 16 & 17. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work." Here grace is solicited from Christ and the Father for the religious comfort and establishment of the Thesalonians, with this remarkable circumstance, that in the order of the words our Lord Jesus is placed first.

A passage in the hundredth and second Psalm from the 25th to the 27th verse inclusive, which will be introduced in another lecture, to prove that the work of creation is ascribed to our Redeemer, may be brought forward here as evidence that he is the object of religious worship. The Psalmist addresses Jehovah, and the inspired Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us, that Jehovah

whom he addressed is Jesus Christ. The Greek preposition which the sacred Penman has employed, Heb. i. 8. in the first clause, "unto the Son he saith," (as appears from the 7th verse where it is also used in the first clause,) signifies *with respect to* or *concerning*; and the words "with respect to the Son, he saith," are understood at the commencement of the 10th verse. "*He saith*," that is, in his word, in the address of his inspired servant, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." Of course this passage must be considered by our opponents as the interpolation of a Greek scribe, or Greek bishop, or as an instance of the Author's inconclusive reasoning, or some way equally convenient will be discovered that they may elude the force of this Scripture; for a Socinian finds nothing of this description too difficult when he is determined to accomplish his purpose, which, however with our views of things, we must regard as a determination to degrade the Saviour of mankind.

It now remains to introduce to your consideration some Scripture passages shewing that the Holy Spirit is a proper object of religious worship.

The Holy Spirit is the Author of Divine Revelation. Acts i. 16 "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spoke before concerning Judas." 2 Pet. i. 21. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man,

but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. These texts, compared with the declaration of the Apostle Paul, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," furnish us at once with this important fact, that the Holy Ghost is that God who suggested and dictated the sacred communications of Holy Writ. You may judge then what is our duty with respect to him on the subject of worship.

The Holy Spirit dwells in believers, and they are called his temple: "know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" But if, as we here learn, believers are consecrated to the Spirit, and are his temple, can it be less certain that he is entitled to their religious veneration?

Hypocrisy and falsehood in religion, are sins against the Holy Ghost of deep and awful aggravation. "But Peter said to Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost, and keep back part of the price of the land?" Yet the person who dissembles in religious matters, could not be said to lie against the Holy Ghost, if it were not our duty devoutly to honour him by a sacred regard to truth and righteousness.

The unpardonable sin is called, "blasphemy against the Spirit." "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men."* The very rudiments of religion, however, are sufficient to

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.—Acts v. 3.—Matt. xii. 31.

teach us, that blasphemy has an immediate and exclusive reference to God, and can be committed only against him whom it is the duty of all men to venerate and worship.

I proceed, however, to positive and direct proof, that, according to the Scriptures, the Holy Ghost is a proper object of sacred homage. Combining precept and example together, we are furnished in the sacred records, with instances of five different species or acts of worship, having for their object the ever blessed Spirit.

1. Adoration is addressed to him by the Seraphim. This you will perceive, by consulting again two passages, which, in part, have been already quoted in the course of these Lectures, namely, the 6th of Isaiah, from the 1st. to the 10th verse inclusive, compared with Acts xxviii. 25, 26, 27.

2. Dedication to the Holy Spirit is commanded by Christ in the institution of baptism which he has prescribed: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* If baptism be an act of worship, of which the Father is the object, according to this commission of the Redeemer given to his Apostles, it is also an act of sacred homage to the Son and the Spirit, and, therefore, this passage, contains a positive requirement or precept, enjoining upon us the worship of

* Matt. xxviii. 19.

the Holy Ghost in the solemn dedication of ourselves to him.

3. Invocation or prayer is addressed to the Holy Spirit: "John to the seven Churches which are in Asia, grace be unto you, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."* This periphrastic expression, "the seven Spirits which are before his throne," intended to denote the Holy Ghost, is generally understood as importing the fulness, variety, and sufficiency of his gifts and operations, considered as the exhaustless source of life, purity, and joy to his churches, and all his people.

4. The service of ordination, or the setting apart of church officers to their sacred employment, which is a very solemn part of the public duties of religion, was, on one occasion, under the immediate direction and superintendence of the Holy Spirit. "As they ministered unto the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have appointed them." The individuals to whom this command was given could not obey it, without distinctly performing in this instance, a religious service to the Holy Ghost. Hence it is added, "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid

* Rev. i. 4.

their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia."

5. A direct and solemn appeal to the Spirit, as a witness to the truth of what he said, was made by the Apostle Paul. "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost."* This declaration of the Apostle is equivalent to an oath, in which the appeal is always considered as made to the Supreme Being, and which is commanded to be made only in the name of God. From these premises, the inference that the Holy Spirit is a proper object of religious homage, is to me plain and irresistible.

Other passages, not a few, might be adduced in proof of the point which it is here attempted to establish. But he who can resist the evidence for it, which the above quotations furnish, can hardly be considered otherwise than in the condition of one whose mind no testimony can influence, whose prejudices are invulnerable, and with whom, consequently, it is in vain to reason. It must, however, I think, appear to every one who is not wholly under the influence of prepossession, that the Scriptures, and especially, the Scriptures of the New Testament, almost everywhere either plainly teach, or evidently suppose the worship of a three-one Jehovah, abounding as they do

* Acts xiii. 2, 3, & 4.—Rom. ix. 1.—Deut. vi. 13.

with expressions concerning Christ and the Spirit, and with references and addresses to them, which, on any other hypothesis, admit of no rational and fair interpretation.

Socinians object to the worship of the Father and the Son, as fraught with dishonour to the former. But the Saviour's words, with which I commenced this Lecture, completely obviate this objection, and leave it without the shadow of a foundation. "He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father who sent him ;"* but how should we honour the Son ? The preceding clause informs us ; "Even as we honour the Father."

In reply to all that has been advanced, our opponents tell us, that Christ when on earth engaged in Divine worship, which, if he himself was a proper object of it, was absurd. This objection, though perhaps, plausible at first sight, is not solid. It proceeds on the supposition that Christ was not man as well as God, to suppose which, is alike contrary to fact and essentially opposed to the principles of Trinitarianism. The Son of God became man for the all-gracious purpose of accomplishing our redemption. Whatever, therefore, was originally and essentially matter of religious obligation to man, became by consequence the duty of the Redeemer. He could not become man without taking upon him our moral responsibility. But though Christ was

* John v. 23.

made in all things like unto his brethren, sin only excepted, and consistently therefore with his state of humiliation here below, engaged in the sacred duties of religion, it is at the same time equally certain, that he also himself received Divine worship, a circumstance which it is impossible to reconcile with the hypothesis, that he was man only and not God also.

In the *Second* place, It will be proper now to consider the manner in which we are to regard the triune Jehovah, in Christian worship. Here also the Divine word is quite sufficient for our direction.

1. In the duties of Christian worship, it is indispensably incumbent on us devoutly to recognize the essential Deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The sacred Persons of the Trinity we should consider as alike Divine, and when we think or speak of them, we should habitually regard them with the same holy reverence. It should always enter into our considerations, that they are one in perfection, majesty, and dominion, and that they are therefore equally entitled to our adoration, confidence, esteem, imitation, and entire devotedness, not as if they were three several Deities, but as being the one self-existent and ever-living God. The proper and equal Divinity of the infinite eternal Three is revealed in the Bible with evidence amounting, as appears to me, to moral demonstration, as an article equally essential in theological knowledge, in genuine Christian morality, and in all acceptable worship.

Nor is it less clear or manifest, that the Bible teaches, that in reference to these Divine and glorious subsistences, there is a real distinction which we generally denominate, personal. Not that we imagine that this term states the precise nature of the distinction, but it is perhaps the most appropriate with which language has furnished us. We can better tell in what this distinction does not consist, than say precisely in what it does. We know that it is not a distinction in nature or essence. In this the sacred persons are one and the same. Hence the words of Christ: "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father."* But we know also, if there be any meaning, any precision, any accuracy in the words of Scripture, that there is a distinction, and that this distinction is complete. While, then, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other inspired Prophets, with Paul, Peter, John, and other sacred Writers of the New Testament, in their holy and sublime compositions, combine to set before me in so full and prominent a manner the Divine equality of God the Father, Jesus Christ his Son, and the Lord the Spirit, shall I refuse to recognize that equality in my devotions, private or public? If I refuse such recognition, and Prophets and Apostles worshipped him, whose nature and will they were qualified and commissioned to reveal, then there is no affinity between their practice and mine in the discharge of this

* John xiv. 9.

most important part of human duty. There is here the greatest difference between us. My worship on such a supposition cannot with truth be called either scriptural or Christian, as its object is the God neither of the Jewish dispensation nor of Christianity, but a being unknown alike to either, unacknowledged by both, and having no existence except in the fancy of men who set up an idol of their own imagination, in the place of Him whose name alone is Jehovah. I will not ask you whether these religious services are properly called Christian, in which such expressions and sentiments concerning our Lord Jesus and his Holy Spirit, as are common in Socinian assemblies, are uttered and received ; I will rather conclude this particular, with that solemn, comprehensive, and, as I think, truly Christian doxology of the established Church of this country : “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end, Amen.” Let the spirit of this ascription ever pervade our devotions, if we would embody in them the genius of the Christian Revelation.

2. If we would worship God on Christian principles, we must have a believing regard to the mediatorial characters of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and devoutly acquiesce in the plan of salvation which the manifestation of those characters in the Gospel unfolds. The sacred records exhibit the persons of the Godhead

as having, in the condescending engagements into which they have respectively entered, made every necessary arrangement and provision for the salvation of sinners, in a manner honourable to God and safe for man. In those engagements and their execution, Jehovah appears as a God of unbounded, unmerited, unsolicited love to his fallen creatures, devising the way, fulfilling the design, and entitled to all the praise of their full redemption. The Father, sustaining in this gracious economy the majesty and authority of the Godhead, in infinite love appointed the Son to the restoration of man from the deplorable condition into which he had fallen by sin, prescribed to him the manner of its accomplishment, namely, by his incarnation, obedience, and death; and on condition of his passing through this course of humiliation and servitude, promised him as his reward, the salvation of his people. In unparalleled condescension and love, the Son voluntarily devoted himself to the undertaking to which he was thus set apart by the Father, became accountable for us to law and justice, engaged to assume, and in due time actually assumed our nature, executed his Father's will in suffering and dying the just for the unjust; and, on his resurrection from the dead, received power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him. While the part allotted in the economy of redemption to the Holy Spirit, is to reveal and

efficaciously to apply the benefits of this great salvation.†

According to the preceding view of the economy of salvation, a regard to the atonement of Christ must be considered as a principal feature of acceptable religious worship: but this feature does not characterize Socinian devotions. If therefore our opponents could prove, (which it will be impossible for them to do,) that in the Scriptures there is neither precept nor example to justify any religious worship but that of the Father only, they would do nothing towards removing our persuasion, that their worship cannot be acceptable. When Abraham “built an altar unto the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord,” when the friends of Job “took seven bullocks and seven rams and offered up for themselves a burnt offering, and Job prayed for them,” when at the temple in Jerusalem during the offering of the daily sacrifice and at the time of incense, “the whole multitude of the people were praying”* in the outer courts; who will say, that in those instances there

† Scriptures confirmatory and illustrative of the above-mentioned positions are produced at length in several parts of these Lectures, some of them, perhaps, more than once; if the reader should wish to examine such passages here, he may consult the following:—Prov. viii. 23.—John xvii. 4.—Luke xix. 10.—John iii. 16.—Isaiah liii. 10.—Heb. xii. 2.—Psalm xl. 7 & 8.—Heb. x. 7—9.—Gal. iv. 4.—Phil. ii. 8.—Heb. vii. 25.—John xvi. 14. & iii.—5.—Titus iii. 5.—Rom. viii. 9—16.

* Gen. xii. 8.—Job xlii. 8.—Luke i. 10.

was not an intimate connexion between the sacrifices and the prayers of the worshippers? Who will venture to assert, that if the sacrifices had been omitted the prayers would have been heard with approbation, or would have been of any avail? The sacrifices were of Divine institution, and, as the inspired Writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has clearly shewn, were intended to typify the great atonement to be made in the fulness of time; and if the type could not be disregarded without rendering supplications and thanksgivings vain, can the antitype? The descendants of Abraham, according to an ancient prediction, are at the present day “without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without *an altar*,† and without an ephod, and without teraphim.” In these circumstances, of what description can we suppose their worship? Can it be acceptable? and when the Socinians have removed “our altar,” discarded “our High Priest,” and rejected “our atoning sacrifice,”* can it be believed that their offerings will be accepted of God?

It may be observed also, that the economy of saving love became necessary in consequence of the sins of men. I do not mean, that God was under any obligation to contrive and accomplish such a plan of mercy.

† Instead of “Image,” the Vulgate, Septuagint, and other Versions read “Altar.”

* Hosea iii. 4,—Heb. xiii. 10,—Heb. iii. 1,—Heb. ix. 26.

In this respect there was no necessity for the glorious scheme of grace and salvation. Our sin, so far from laying Jehovah under any obligation to save, would have justified him in leaving us to irretrievable and everlasting destruction. But the sin of man, made the economy of mediation necessary, if our salvation were accomplished at all. For God only could effect it, inasmuch as he alone is adequate to so great an undertaking; and if accomplished by him, it must be on principles and in a mode of dispensation according with, and developing, illustrating, and glorifying the holiness of his nature, the purity of his law, the rectitude of his government, and the inflexible justice essential to every part of his moral administration. But salvation could not be vouchsafed to sinful man by a just and holy God, and, at the same time, harmony be preserved among his moral perfections, without provision being made for an adequate satisfaction to infinite justice on account of human transgressions, and for a perfect obedience to the Divine law, in consideration of which, believers might be admitted to Divine favour and blessed with eternal life. It was not to *render* God placable, to *dispose* him to mercy, to *incline* him to be gracious, that the atonement of Christ was at all necessary; though Socinians say that we maintain this, or that our sentiments concerning the death of Christ as a satisfaction for sin amount to it. But so far from believing this monstrous position, we regard it with horror, nor can our opinions

be shewn to involve it, except by the grossest misrepresentation. We believe that God is necessarily good and essentially merciful, and that the death of Christ, as an atonement for sin, was neither necessary nor in any sense provided for the purpose of making him gracious, as if he were not so in himself, or had not been so before. But we maintain also, as the sacred volume teaches, that Jehovah is essentially just, that he will avenge the breach of his law, and that, therefore, an expiation for our iniquities was indispensable, in order that mercy might flow down to our world, and its matchless benefits, pardon and life, be conferred on the truly penitent, consistently with the claims of his eternal righteousness, and with the full vindication of its essential honours in the punishment of sin according to its demerit. If then we would engage in Divine worship in a Christian manner, we must uniformly and religiously regard the character of Jehovah as exhibited to our view in the way of salvation by Christ. Confessing our guilt and deploring our unrighteousness, we must humbly look for redemption to the infinite love of God through Immanuel's atoning death and the all-sufficient grace of the Holy Spirit. In the writings of the New Testament particularly, we find the sacred Penmen almost constantly, with evident feelings of peculiar interest, either exhibiting and extolling the greatness of the Father's love in the gift of his Son; or describing the Divine glory and mediatorial excellencies of

Christ, his amazing love, his life, his sufferings, his death, the cleansing efficacy of his blood, the unsearchable riches of his fulness, the power of his grace, and the magnitude and value of his salvation; or setting forth the character, offices, gifts, and graces of the third Person in the adorable Trinity: while the whole is interspersed with devotional expressions of admiration, acknowledgments of dependence, and appropriate exhortations to gratitude and obedience. If then, we would imitate them, we should adore and bless the infinite compassion of the eternal Father; receive, trust, and celebrate the great Redeemer as our Prophet, Priest, and King; and abound in thankful adoration for the regenerating power, the purifying influence, infallible teaching, and Divine consolations of the ever blessed Comforter.

3. When engaging in the exercises of devotion, we should depend entirely on the Holy Spirit to enable us rightly to discharge this sacred duty. We need his teaching to enlighten us. Great is the moral and spiritual darkness of our minds, and he only can remove it. He only can rectify our views, lead us to form a right judgment of the things of God, and open the eyes of our understandings to the light of heavenly truth. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."* "When the Spirit of truth is come," said our Lord to his disciples, "he shall guide

* 1 Cor. ii. 10.

you into all the truth." We need also his renewing influence in our worship, to sanctify our thoughts, excite in us holy desires, inspire us with proper reverence when we draw near to the Almighty ; to keep us from hypocrisy and self-deception in such a solemn, important, and sacred employ ; to make us truly penitent, meek, humble, and forgiving ; to guard us against all presumption and unbecoming freedom in addressing the greatest, the wisest, and the most holy of all beings ; to endue us with heavenly affections, and to enable us to keep our minds serious and collected. All these things are necessary that we may engage with profit and acceptance in the exercises of devotion. But for every thing of this nature we are and must be indebted to the gracious operation and aid of the Lord, the Holy Spirit. To him, then, we must raise our desires and direct our supplications, and on him we must stay our minds, if we would "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."* How they can perform the duty of worship aright, whose doctrinal system makes such dependence as this unnecessary, is a problem which I shall not attempt to solve. But I submit it to your consideration, whether the devotions of such persons must not be essentially different from those of the Apostle, whose testimony concerning assistance from the Holy Spirit in one branch of worship, is, "the

* John xvi. 13.—1 Peter ii. 5.

Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."* Brethren, the nearer we live to the Holy Spirit in humble constant reliance on his gracious, quickening, and transforming influence, the closer we shall be enabled to adhere to Christ, the more we shall know and enjoy the Father's love, and the more intimate communion we shall have with God, in all the means of grace, and in every department of the religious life.

Lastly, in all our devotional services we should look in the exercise of penitence and faith to the atonement and intercession of Christ as the exclusive ground of our acceptance in Christian worship.

Whether we come to God in a general view of his character, or address ourselves in particular to the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost, the blood of Christ alone can procure our acceptance. Whether we draw near to the Majesty of heaven as our Creator, Benefactor, or Redeemer; as our Governor or Judge; as our Friend or Father; the blood of Christ is the only proper and availing medium of access. Whether we approach Jehovah in closet devotion, in family and social religion, or in public worship, in prayer or praise, in meditation or reading the Scriptures, in preaching or hearing, in fasting,

* Rom. viii. 26.

baptism, or the Lord's supper, the precious blood of Christ is the only basis on which we can with safety rest our hope of being accepted of him: for we are sinners in all things. Our nature is sinful, our thoughts are sinful, our words are sinful. There is sin in all our best performances. We breathe impurity, we carry defilement with us wherever we go, and impurity attends us wherever we remain. We need then continually to be sprinkled with the cleansing blood of Christ, but especially when we take upon us to enter into the presence of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and by whom sin cannot be regarded, but with infinite abhorrence. Hear the words of an inspired Apostle: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, his flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water."* "Seeing," says he again, "that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let

* Heb. x. 19,—22.

us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need?"* Whether they can be said to worship God in a Christian manner, who, notwithstanding such language as this in the Christian Scriptures, discard the idea of trusting in the blood of Christ, it is surely no difficult thing to determine.

My hearers, in what light, and with what feelings do you regard the worship of the Almighty? Your obligation to it is inseparable from your existence as rational creatures. And the spiritual discharge of it is essential to your happiness. You can no more realize substantial, abiding felicity, apart from nearness to your Maker, than you could enjoy the light of day if the sun had not only left our hemisphere, but had been extinguished by its Creator in complete and everlasting annihilation.

* Heb. iv. 14 & 15.

LECTURE VII.



THE EVIL AND DANGER OF SOCINIANISM.

1 JOHN v. 12.

“He that hath not the Son hath not life.”

My sole intention, in the present Lecture, is respectfully and earnestly to address to all whom it may concern the voice of affectionate remonstrance and friendly warning. That Socinianism, when deliberately adopted and resolutely maintained with the Bible in our possession, is a species of aggravated impiety, and that without repentance, it is pregnant with inevitable ruin to the souls of men, appear certainties in my view. Nor do I perceive how any one can implicitly believe the Scriptures, and entertain on this subject a different opinion. It is by no means denied on my part, that Socinians do many of them

embrace their system from conviction, and continue their adherence to it from conscientious motives. But this, I apprehend, neither makes the system harmless to those persons, nor renders them in their attachment to it exempt from a dreadful hazard. The Apostle Paul, previous to his conversion, was strictly conscientious in his rejection of Christ and in persecuting the church of God. "I verily thought with myself," says he, "that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." The Apostle, however, never took occasion from this circumstance in his character when an unbeliever, to justify his former principles and conduct, or intimate that he was not then, notwithstanding his sincerity, chargeable with atrocious guilt, and in a state of awful peril. His own description of what he was at that period of his life, is given in these terms: "a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious"—though at the same time, as he elsewhere informs us, he was in his profession, as one of the sect of the Pharisees, "touching the righteousness which is in the law blameless."*

My object, in this reference to the unbelieving, persecuting Saul of Tarsus, is to shew that a person may be sincerely wrong both in opinion and practice, and yet that his errors in judgment and conduct may be far from having the character of innocence, however conscientious he may be, especially if he have within

* Acts xxvi. 9.—1 Tim i. 13.—Phil. iii. 6.

reach the source of knowledge, and the means of gaining sufficient information. It is a melancholy truth, which is nevertheless frequently confirmed, and which strongly indicates the moral defection and imbecility of our nature, that a man's prejudices are capable of misleading his judgment and controlling his convictions. It is a thing of constant occurrence, that our cherished prepossessions lead us first to look favourably upon an error, then to endeavour to persuade ourselves that it is not an error, and, lastly, to believe that it is a truth. When a man's heart is set against the truth of God, so that he wishes not to believe it, when sentiments the most erroneous are all favoured by his inclinations, and when he himself has not made up his mind to sacrifice his strongest partialities and his dearest prepossessions at the shrine of evidence, it is not only practicable, but easy for him soon to think that doctrines clearly shewn to be essential articles of the Christian Revelation, are false, and that the obnoxious opinions which he is anxious to embrace, are, on the other hand, correct. The light of moral evidence is useful and available only to those who are disposed to look upon it. It does not force a man to see it whether he will or not, any more than the light of the material sun compels a man to behold it whether or not he will open his eyes. A disposition to receive the illuminations of truth in the one case, corresponds with a willingness to employ our sight in perceiving the rays of the sun in the other. It is

certain, no man who forms not a very extraordinary exception to the rest of his species, would be unwilling to admit the light of day. Nor is it less certain, that had not human nature sadly degenerated from its original purity, no man would be found wanting in inclination to receive the light of the moral and religious evidence contained in the Gospel. It is because the minds of men are depraved, alienated from God, averse from good, and in love with error and sin, that there is not in all a readiness to avail themselves of the latter, answering to the disposition every where to be found to enjoy the benefit of the former.

The light of Revelation is not presented to us so as necessarily to extort conviction, as in the case of a mathematical demonstration. It is given in such portions and degrees as to furnish, in the manner in which it is regarded and treated, a fair test of principle and a good criterion of character. If the mind be under a spiritual influence, truly teachable, as well as diligent in search of information, if it have no partialities to gratify beyond the desire of being set right, and be willing to abandon its most favourite theories and speculations when they appear not well supported; and, in a word, if it be ready to follow truth any where and every where, there is evidence abundantly sufficient in the Gospel to ensure its full conviction, and its unqualified and permanent acquiescence. And in the case of such assent, an interesting spectacle is offered to our contemplation. In

whomsoever it is exhibited, we see the existence, the developement, and the triumph of sound religious principle. It is a fine instance of Christian obedience and self-denial, when a person makes an entire and voluntary surrender of his dearest predilections to the claims of truth. It is an unanswerable proof of sterling piety, to evince which, however, no opportunity would be afforded, if truth were so presented to the mind as necessarily to compel the assent of all. On the other hand, if a man be enslaved by the love of preconceived opinions, so that he is determined at all events to hold them fast, if he be not humble, prayerful, diligent, self-denying, and persevering in his inquiries, if he refuse to assume the attitude, take the place, and exercise the teachableness of a scholar, if he will not pass through the proper discipline, and be not willing to make the necessary sacrifice; truth, instead of presenting herself to him in full and commanding view, will disdain to have fellowship with him, will hide her glories from his sight, pronounce him unworthy of her heavenly communications and her celestial embrace, and leaving him to the ignorance, folly, and presumption which he prefers, suffer him to wander on a prey to every delusion, while with inward and self-complacent confidence he imagines himself right.

A man without humbleness of mind, child-like docility, submission to the Scriptures, superiority to prejudice, and dependence on Divine teaching, is not

prepared to receive the light of truth, nor can its irradiating beam penetrate his mind. It is so conveyed to man in the Scriptures, that while his mind retains its original qualities, he must necessarily remain blind to it, and may even be truly sincere in opposing the truth and adhering with resolute pertinacity to the most pernicious errors. Let it be observed, however, that in such an instance, the fault is wholly in man himself. When a person is thus sincerely wrong, it is because he is not in earnest to have his mistakes rectified. It is because he loves error more than truth. It is because he has a criminal preference for what is wrong, while against what is right he has, and cherishes, a rooted antipathy. If he were so indifferent to error that he would willingly sacrifice it for truth, or if his love to truth prevailed so much, that for it he would be ready to give up instantly every notion opposed to it, however otherwise dear to him, he would not long be permitted to continue the dupe of delusion. The scales of ignorance would fall from his eyes, and the light of the Gospel in all its glory would open to his wondering mind. But in the dispensations of inscrutable wisdom and infinite righteousness, the guilt of loving darkness more than light carries in itself its own punishment. When, therefore, an individual has contracted and still retains a fondness for prejudices and opinions subversive of the plain maxims of Revelation, while to the leading principles of the New Testament he discovers the most marked and

unequivocal dislike, as a just retribution for such perverseness, he is left to the folly, guilt, and misery of believing the falsehood he loves with a firmness worthy only of the truth which he hates. The Apostle speaks of those who “received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; and for this cause,” says he, “God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie.”*

It is in this way alone, in my apprehension, that any man, after a serious examination of the Scriptures, can be conscientious and sincere in a profession of Socinianism. It is, because, prepossessed with hatred to the truth, and refusing to bow to the commanding evidence which supports it, he is justly given up to the power of delusion which he voluntarily chooses, so that, notwithstanding its manifest contrariety to the Bible, he believes it to be the doctrine of heaven. Did he come to the word of God with a mind unoccupied by prepossessions too dear to him to be abandoned, in other words, with a mind fully open to conviction, wishful above all things to conform its views to the sacred record, and not anxious to explain the Scriptures by its previous opinions, and to make inspiration square with the standard which it has set up for itself; he would find the truth to his abundant satisfaction and unutterable joy. For it is written and cannot fail, “The meek will he guide in judgment, the

* 2 Thess. ii. 10 & 11.

meek will he teach his way." But coming to the Bible with a mind pre-engaged by its own favourite fancies, which it has no desire to relinquish, but every wish to retain and strengthen, he is and continues blind both to the truth and his own delusion, gravely resisting the clearest evidence, and as gravely, sincerely, and even conscientiously maintaining the most glaring absurdities. The sin, therefore, which marks his course, is all his own, originating as it does in a fixed and obstinate partiality for error in preference to the truth, which constitutes a state of mind in no small degree offensive to God; nor can his sincerity exculpate him from its guilt. Whatever may be his conscientiousness, it neither makes him innocent in the delusions to which he is thus voluntarily devoted, nor renders him unexposed to their terrible consequences. "This is the condemnation," says our Saviour, "that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light."*

I shall now proceed to consider more particularly the evil and danger of Socinianism.

In the *First* place, It is fraught with blasphemy against Christ, the Redeemer of man, and the Holy Spirit, our adorable Sanctifier.

It is here taken for granted, that, in the course of these Lectures, the Deity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit is indubitably proved. Whether it is so or

* Psalm xxv. 9.—John iii. 19.

not, the candid will judge for themselves. But supposing that this doctrine is established with clearness and certainty by the Scriptures, then how destructive must Socinianism be ! The mighty Saviour it brings down to a level with his creatures. Him whom angels adore, it divests of all the attributes of Godhead, and reduces to an order of creatureship lower than the angels, making him only man, subject to fallibility, and liable to sin. Of the Holy Ghost also, it denies that he possesses either personality or divinity, affirming him to be only a quality or attribute of Jehovah. If, therefore, blasphemy be indignity offered to him who is the Most High, or irreverent thinking and speaking of the Lord our God, then it is the very foundation of this system. Blasphemy pervades its essential articles. The sermons in which it is preached teem with blasphemy. The publications in which it is propagated abound with blasphemy. Its converts are converts to blasphemy, and all its friends are the abettors and promoters of blasphemy.

In the *Second* place, Socinianism admits not into its system those prominent truths which characterize the doctrine of salvation.

The doctrine of salvation is that system of sacred truth which teaches the necessity of salvation, which describes the nature of salvation, which insists on its vast importance, and which leads to an acquaintance with its plan, its Author, and the manner in which it is communicated. By this glorious doctrine the

Christian revelation is distinguished. Christ taught it, Apostles preached it, and it is recorded and transmitted to us in the life of the former, and in the canonical writings of the latter.

It shews all men to be by nature in a state of sin, entirely depraved, wholly destitute of spiritual power, slaves of Satan, enemies of God, utterly unworthy of Divine favour, and justly exposed on account of transgression to misery everlasting. The eternal Son of God it makes known as having assumed the character of our glorious deliverer by becoming incarnate, submitting to an ignominious and painful death for the expiation of human offences, rising again for the justification of true believers, and ascending to heaven, there to appear as their advocate and forerunner.

Salvation, which in this way Christ has obtained for sinners, is bestowed on them, as this doctrine further teaches, on the part of heaven in free and sovereign love, and received on our part by faith alone, which is itself the gift of God; thus totally excluding every occasion of boasting in the creature, and securing the whole glory of redemption to the riches of Divine grace. "All have sinned," is the testimony of inspiration, "and come short of the glory of God." "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." "We were without strength." "The carnal mind is enmity against God."*

* Rom. iii. 23.—Jer. xvii. 9.—Rom. v. 6. & viii. 7.

“The prince of the power of the air, is the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. We were by nature children of wrath.” “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.” “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us, as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” “By grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.” “Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? By the law of works? Nay, but by the law of faith.”*

This is a very brief summary of the doctrine of salvation, so clearly and fully inculcated in the New Testament. And how is this doctrine regarded and treated by Socinians? Do they reverence it? Do they implicitly believe it? Do they bow in cordial and entire subjection to its authority? Do they thankfully appropriate it, and diligently and seriously improve it to practical and saving purposes, acknowledging to God their transgressions, affected with an abasing sense of their guilt and unworthiness, bewailing their depravity, looking for pardon, holiness, and eternal life, to the mercy of God, through what Christ has done and suffered for us, and turning to the Lord

* Eph. ii. 2 & 3.—2 Cor. viii. 9.—Gal. iii. 13.—Eph. ii. 8.
Rom. iii. 27.

with purpose of heart? Alas ! no. They deny every material part of it. They deny that man is the depraved and guilty, the weak, unworthy, and miserable creature, which this doctrine shews him to be. They deny that Christ came into the world for the purposes for which this doctrine declares him to have come. They deny that we are saved by grace irrespective of our own works, through faith in the redeeming work and sanctifying Spirit of the Son of God. Nay, more—they deny that these things which the Bible reveals with the greatest precision, are contained in it at all.

How comes this to pass ? Is it because they have not access to the Scriptures, and, consequently, not the opportunity of seeing for themselves ? No. They thus oppose the truth with the light of Revelation shining all around them. With the Bible in their possession, and professing to regard it as containing a message from above, they thus deny its essential truths. It is not then for want of the infallible source of truth, that they reject the testimony of God concerning his Son, and salvation by him. It is because they shut their eyes, stop their ears, and harden their hearts against the doctrines of the Gospel. They believe not, because they will not be enlightened ; they oppose conviction, they are unwilling to be converted lest Christ should heal them.

Socinianism is a disease of the heart, not of the head. They who receive this system, have sufficient powers

of understanding to learn the truth of Christ, if their affections were inclined to embrace it. But they are internally set against it by prejudices groundless and most unreasonable, which at once pervert the judgment and blind the understanding. They cannot see ; but, then, it is because they have a secret wish not to see. The truth which they should perceive and acknowledge is offensive to them, and they turn their attention away from it. In the great business of salvation, as well as in affairs of inferior moment, the old adage, "none are so blind as those who will not see," is strictly true. These persons industriously furnish themselves with objections to evangelical sentiments, charge those objections upon the truth, and then conclude, that it is not the truth, or, that as rational men, they cannot receive it. They act just as a man who should throw dust into his own eyes, and then exclaim that he could not see the object before him ; or who should raise insurmountable obstacles in his way, and then complain that he could not pass. Their enmity against the doctrine of salvation leads them to cherish objections to it, which prevent the unprejudiced exercise of their understanding, and make it unable in this solemn concern to do its proper duty.

But to inquire a little more minutely into what has been stated already in general terms. Is not this conduct in the highest degree sinful ? Is it not making light of the authority of Heaven ? Is it not

contemning the counsel of the Most High? Is it not rebelling against God? Is it not insulting the Divine Majesty, in a point where his honour is most vitally concerned? Can that heart be right with God which is so impenetrable to his word? Is it possible that such a conduct with respect to the Scriptures can proceed from a truly gracious mind? Say not, that the individual is charitable to the poor, kind to his neighbours, condescending and affable to his fellow creatures, and virtuous and useful among men. The question in this place is, what is his conduct towards the Almighty? If, in the wilful rejection of Divine truth, he be carrying on hostilities against God, will it avail him any thing that he stands well in the estimation of men? Will it justify him before Jehovah, or put him out of certain danger from Divine indignation, that while fighting against him in opposition to the plainest declarations of his word, he acquit himself well among men? These are questions which it well becomes every Socinian most seriously to consider.

It is, I believe, very generally maintained by Socinians, that "error is not a crime." I mean, of course, error in religion. But whence do they derive this opinion? Not from the Scriptures, I am persuaded. David says, "who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults."* It may, be

* Psalm xix. 12.

proper here to examine this sentiment a little. Error in religion not a crime, when God has given us his word for the express purpose of instructing and enlightening us! Then to live in wilful ignorance of his word, and to fail to make the proper use of it can be no sin. Error in religion not a crime, when it comprehends wrong notions of God, his government, and the nature of his worship! Then it is no matter in a moral point of view whether we think rightly of God and his dispensations, and whether we worship him in a proper way or not. Error in religion not a crime, when it is incompatible with a competent knowledge of our duty! Then it is of no moral consideration whether or not we rightly obey God. Error in religion not a crime, when it is often inconsistent with the knowledge of the way of salvation! Then it is of small, if any importance, whether we be acquainted with the way of safety or not, and to be living in gross ignorance is equally virtuous with being savingly enlightened. How widely different from this, the Apostle James must have thought, when he said, “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth and one convert him, let him know that he who converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins?”*

Socinians, however, do look upon error as an evil. They consider it in the light of a misfortune,

* James v. 19 & 20.

and think that it should be regarded in the same point of view in which we regard a physical malady, and with a kindred feeling. We should regard, they say, the individual in whom it is, as entitled to our pity, while we seek to check the progress of his error, and if possible to remove it, just as we wish to recover a sick person to a sound state of body.

But if this be the worst light in which we should contemplate error, then a person is no more obnoxious to punishment on account of the false sentiments he entertains, than a man merits condemnation because he is in a fever. This is poison to the soul, the most pernicious and destructive. This view of the subject keeps wholly out of sight the all-important facts, that the soul, which is the seat of error, possesses intelligence ; but that the body which is the subject of affliction, is a substance devoid of rationality ; that in error we act voluntarily, but that in disease we are passive ; that in error we are moral agents, but that in bodily indisposition we are mere sufferers. Let us duly attend to these considerations, and they will leave us no reason to doubt that we are accountable to God, not more for our outward actions than for the sentiments we entertain ; and that, consequently, so far as we have the opportunity and means of right information, we are approved in his sight, or chargeable with guilt, as the opinions we adopt are correct or erroneous. But in becoming indisposed, when, in the course of Divine providence, afflictions overtake

us, we incur no guilt ; nor, on the other hand, when we continue in a healthful state of body, do we discharge any duty. Besides, if Socinians be correct in deeming error innocent, they ought to inform us, how it happens that the Bible commands us to beware of pernicious doctrines, and why it warns us of false prophets and teachers ; and does not at the same time give us similar cautions relative to diseases, empirics, and incompetent practitioners in medicine.

In the *Third* place, Socinianism is a proud and contemptuous rejection of the only meritorious cause of eternal life.

Eternal life, including every spiritual blessing, is procured for us by the atoning blood and perfect righteousness of Christ. The Redeemer, speaking of his blood as represented in the sacramental cup, says, "This is my blood which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." The Apostle of the Gentiles declares, that "without shedding of blood, there is no remission ;" that, "it is," however, "impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin : but that Christ by his own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." Another Apostle declares, that we are "redeemed by the precious blood of Christ."* We are informed in the Revelation of John, that "the elders before the throne, sung a new song, saying,

* Matt. xxvi. 28.—Heb. ix. 22.—Heb. x. 4. & ix. 12.—
1 Peter i. 18.

“Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.” And in the preface to the Revelation, the company of the saved are represented as saying, “Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever. Amen.”

But notwithstanding these statements and expressions, a Socinian asserts, that the blood of Christ has no efficacy to cleanse from sin, that it was spilt for no such purpose, and that it is not the meritorious cause of salvation in any, even the smallest degree. It does indeed most deeply concern every person of this description, to consider well, whether he does not by advancing such positions and maintaining such sentiments, most certainly put salvation far from him, and endanger his eternal interests. According to the Scriptures, there is one meritorious ground of acceptance with God for fallen man, and only one, namely, the complete obedience and atonement of Christ. “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.” “Other foundation can no man lay. Neither is there salvation in any other than the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”* His obedience unto death, however, as a meritorious cause of spiritual and heavenly blessings, all who attach themselves to the Socinian system wholly

* Rev. v. 9.—Rev. i. 5 & 6.—Heb. x. 26.—1 Cor. iii. 11.
Acts iv. 12.

reject. If, then, their being mistaken here, were only matter of probability, how awful is their condition.

It is true that this denomination contains persons of excellent character, of sterling integrity, of great benevolence, of kind dispositions, adorning and dignifying with many virtues the social circle and the walks of public life. Numbers are to be found entertaining the opinions in question, who are in various respects patterns, which it would be well if every Trinitarian imitated. Let every appropriate commendation be awarded to them. But let it also be remembered that they are sinners against God, and, as such, need, as really as the vilest transgressor on earth, an interest in the great atonement, which, in infinite love, Christ has made for the guilty, and through which alone sinful men can find peace with God. It is not those excellencies of moral and social character exemplified by many Socinians that expose them to danger, but the sin of resting on them for acceptance with God, either wholly or partially in the place of Christ, and thus rejecting his infinitely precious blood.

A man may be all that is excellent in some respects, and every thing that is the reverse of excellence in others. But the former can avail for itself only, having no power to prevent the effect of the latter. A person may be a tender husband, an indulgent parent, a kind master, a faithful servant, and an

upright tradesman; he may be generous to his friends, hospitable to his neighbours, obliging, affable, and condescending to all, yet a traitor to his King. But who would imagine that the virtues of relative and social life would be allowed to procure a man's exemption from the penal consequences of the greatest crime in the community? He, however, who with many excellent qualities of heart and life rejects the blood of Christ as the only procuring cause of salvation, is in a predicament exactly similar. He is an estimable character among men, who are with himself fellow-subjects of the government of Jehovah; but he is a traitor to the King of heaven, to Christ the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. The rejection of Christ as the all-sufficient and only Saviour is the greatest sin of which we can be guilty. It may consist with much that is laudable in our conduct to men, but it is the highest of all indignities that can be put upon the wisdom, the love, the power, the holiness, the justice, yea, the whole character of God and every department of his moral government.

It is a favourite notion with Socinians, that men are accepted of God, for the sake of virtuous and pious habits, and several passages are adduced by them, which they consider as fully warranting and establishing this opinion. One of these passages is: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods

came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." These words of the Saviour contain an interesting representation of the security of those who keep his sayings, comprehended in the foregoing discourse; but they do not, as I perceive, even refer to the meritorious cause of our acceptance with Jehovah. They merely describe a character, and assert the perfect safety of him who bears that character. But it will be said, Do not many Antitrinitarians keep the sayings of the Redeemer, included in this celebrated portion of his instructions? That I shall leave to the consideration of others who are better acquainted with them than myself. It is, however, worthy of our remembrance, that the first words of Christ in his sermon on the mount, are: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* Now the poor in spirit, we learn from the Lord himself, by the Prophet Isaiah, lxvi. 2. are "those who tremble at his word." But whether the spirit of Socinianism makes its professor tremble at the word of the Almighty, or does not rather induce him to trample on its authority, is also submitted to the consideration of the candid and impartial. Besides, those who under the influence of right principles keep the instructions of Christ, will be found implicitly to receive and conscientiously to follow him in all

* Matt. vii. 24 & 25.—Matt. v. 3.

that he has taught. But whether Socinians answer to this description of character is a matter which may well be recommended to their own calm and dispassionate consideration.

Another passage on which Socinians lay considerable stress, in endeavouring to prove that man is accepted of God, in consideration of virtuous and pious habits, is the Redeemer's sublime description of the final judgment: "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was a stranger and ye took me in, naked and ye clothed me, sick and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered and fed thee, or thirsty and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger and took thee in? or naked and clothed thee? or when saw we thee sick, or in prison and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."* To quote these words, however, for the purpose just specified, betrays, in my opinion, a sad inattention to their obvious import and design, and is a gross perversion of the language of sacred writ; for,

1. Christ is here simply delineating the gracious dispositions and spiritual character of those who will be raised to endless life in the world above. But this is very different from representing piety of heart and life as forming a ground of title or claim to celestial glory. The pious acts of Christian obedience which our Lord Jesus mentions in this place as having been performed by the righteous, are, according to other parts of Scripture, to be considered as legitimate fruits of faith in Christ and of sincere love to him, constituting genuine evidence of union to the Redeemer and personal interest in his justifying obedience; but furnishing in no degree to believers a claim to salvation on the ground of merit. In this light, and no other, they will, I think, be enumerated at the final day. Mr. Hervey, in some remarks on the words, "*for* I was an hungered, &c. &c." observes: "*for*, in this connexion, denotes not the foundation, but the evidence of right. 'I acquit such a person,' says the Arbitrator in a judicial claim, *for* the witnesses depose that the debt is paid.' The deposition, which answers to the righteous acts here mentioned, is the proof; payment of the debt, which corresponds with Christ's perfect obedience, is the cause of the discharge." Moreover, if believers were accepted in consideration of their good works, then it cannot reasonably be supposed, that the enumeration of those works by the Redeemer on this solemn occasion would excite the surprise of his followers.

They would, on the contrary, be expecting it as the acknowledgment of their rightful claims.

2. The persons addressed in these words of the Redeemer, are denominated “the blessed of the Father;”^{*} but who are they that are thus blessed? Only true believers in the Son of God. “Kiss the Son,” it is said, Psalm ii. 12, “lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. “Blessed” it is then added, “are all they who put their trust in him.” But Socinians do not put their trust in Christ. They reject him as a ground of confidence. Have they not reason then to look well to consequences? And what is the nature of that blessedness which pertains to those who put their trust in Christ? We learn its nature from the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians. In verse 3rd, the Apostle says, “blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all *spiritual blessings* in heavenly things, in *Christ Jesus*.” And it is particularly worthy of notice, that in a following verse we find that one of these blessings is acceptance “in the beloved,” that is, acceptance for the sake of Christ, not for the sake of virtuous and pious habits. Ought it not then to be a matter of most serious inquiry with Socinians, whether they do not by substituting their own virtues for Christ, and rejecting

* Matt. xxv. 34.

him as the basis of hope before God, shut themselves out from the blessedness of acceptance with the Father? It is true that they feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, and relieve the distressed. But it is not the mere exercise of these charities that constitutes the character of Christ's disciples as he himself delineates it in the passage adduced. The several acts of Christian benevolence here specified and applauded by the Saviour are feeding *his* hungry, clothing *his* naked, visiting *his* sick; that is, those in circumstances of want and distress who truly believe and trust in Christ, exhibit the characteristics of supreme love to him, bear his image, and walk with him in all his ways. Not that the religion of Jesus requires us to limit our bounty to persons of this description, though, in consequence of their relation to Christ, they are to be considered as having the first claim. But it is ministering to the necessities of such out of love to Christ and love to them for his sake as his people, redeemed by his blood, renewed by his grace, and devoted to his glory, that alone impresses on our acts of charity the stamp of Christian obedience. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." Now whether or not Socinians thus honour Christ in his followers, when instead of exercising charity on such principles, they perform the offices of humanity and benevolence to their fellow-creatures in general, with a view to

procure for themselves acceptance with Heaven, is another question, which surely is far from being unworthy of their very serious investigation.

Another passage which Antitrinitarians consider as establishing their hypothesis on this important subject is: "In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him."* It would, however, I think, be difficult to prove that this is any thing more than another of those general descriptions (with which Revelation abounds) of the character of those who are and will be accepted of Jehovah. It is "beating the air," indeed, to quote such a passage as teaching us any thing concerning the legal ground of acceptance. But should this be granted by our opponents, still a Socinian on reading these words of the Apostle, would say, "unless it can be proved that there are none calling themselves Unitarians, who fear God and work righteousness, it is in vain to speak of the evil and danger of their system." I will not undertake to prove that there are none of this religious denomination who fear God and work righteousness. I will rather propose to persons of this description, the following important inquiries, that they may answer them to God and their own consciences. Can a man fearing God and working righteousness, with the light of the New Testament shining full upon him, reject the doctrine

* Acts x. 35.

of salvation by the blood of Christ? Can a man fearing God and working righteousness, with the language of inspiration before him, affirm and persist in affirming, that spiritual regeneration is not a truth of the Bible, and that a personal experience of it is not necessary to holiness here and life everlasting in a future world? Can a man fear God and work righteousness, and at the same time affirm, having the Gospel for his infallible directory, that Christ had no existence before his birth as the Son of Mary, that he is only a man, that error is no crime, and that Christ never condemned any man for his opinions?

And now, my hearers, do *you* and let *me* take all due care in reference to our own salvation, and be solicitous, that when looking to others we do not forget ourselves. Nay, let us see to it, that we think of ourselves first and chiefly. Let us remember that our opinions may be orthodox, and yet our souls be in danger of perishing for ever. We may know the Gospel in theory and yet have no experience of its saving power on our minds, nor exhibit its holy effects in our life. But it is these things that accompany salvation. If you regard Christ as the only Saviour, let your sentiments concerning his character lead you to him daily in prayer and dependence. Live to him in all things, and endeavour to recommend him to all around you. Do I address any one who calls himself a Unitarian? Be assured, my friend, that none but Christ can do you good. The

Bible tells you that you are a sinner and you cannot deny the charge. It also informs you, that Christ came into the world to save sinners. And do you refuse to acknowledge him and to trust in him only for salvation? Then what can you expect but to perish everlastingly. O be wise while it is called to-day, before it be too late to come to Him, who is now ready to receive you! Can you believe it possible to retain your present sentiments when Christ shall call you to appear before Him as your Judge? "If he who despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses, of how much sorer punishment suppose you shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the Covenant wherewith he was sanctified, a common thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* How dangerous must it be to hazard an entrance into the invisible world, with disparaging views of Him who fixes the eternal and unalterable destinies of men?

* Heb. x. 28 & 29.

LECTURE VIII.



THE PUBLIC ABETTORS OF SOCINIANISM SUBVERTERS
OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, AND NOT ENTITLED
TO THE APPELLATION OF CHRISTIAN MINISTERS.

GAL. i. and part of the 7th ver.

*“There be some that would pervert the Gospel of
Christ.”**

THE persons of whom the Apostle here writes were Judaizing teachers, who had artfully insinuated themselves into the confidence and esteem of the churches of Galatia, and with too much success sought to turn them away from the pure doctrine of the Gospel, especially the great evangelical truth of justification by faith alone. They taught, it seems, that in order to be justified, it was necessary not only to believe in

* Doddridge translates the passage, “there are some who are desirous to *subvert* the Gospel of Christ.”

Christ, but also to be circumcised, and to keep the law of Moses. This, however, the Apostle considered and represented to be an entire subversion of the Gospel. "If ye be circumcised," says he, in the fifth chapter of this Epistle from the second verse, "Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man who is circumcised, (with a view to justification,) that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." If, then, in the judgment and according to the infallible decision of an inspired Apostle, the Gospel was subverted by men whose innovations on its doctrines were confined, perhaps, chiefly to one point, does not the language of the text apply with still more propriety and force to the class of public teachers whom this Lecture introduces to your notice, inasmuch as they expunge from the Christian system, not only the doctrine of justification by faith alone, but almost every other truth peculiar to Revelation?

In the course of this Lecture, I shall, *First*, state the prominent doctrines of the Gospel:

Secondly, shew in a number of particulars that the public Abettors of Socinianism are chargeable with its subversion:

Thirdly, lay before you a few considerations from which it may be inferred that they have no right to the appellation of Christian ministers.

And, *Fourthly*, conclude with a practical address.

In the *First* place, I shall state to you the prominent doctrines of the Gospel. The Gospel is the Christian revelation. The grand subject of it is salvation by Christ alone. It describes the misery and ruin of man by sin; his utter inability to deliver himself from that guilt and condemnation in which transgression has involved him; his need of a Divine Almighty helper to accomplish his redemption; and the infinite pity and love of the Son of God, who interposed on his behalf, and has become the "Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."

1. It asserts the Deity of Christ, informing us that he and the "Father are one," and that, "being in the form of God," he "thought it not robbery to be equal with God." Any other than a person truly Divine would have been in every respect unequal to the mighty undertaking of redeeming fallen man. But Christ, being Divine in nature and infinite in perfection, was fully adequate to engage in our redemption and to carry it into complete effect. He is "mighty to save." This is his own assertion by the Prophet. "He is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by him."* This is the declaration of the Apostle. But salvation is exclusively the prerogative of Jehovah. Then Christ is Jehovah.

* Heb. v. 9.—John x. 30.—Phil. ii. 6.—Isaiah lxiii. 1.—
Heb. vii. 25.

2. The Gospel makes known the incarnation of Christ, or his appearance in human nature, for the purpose of working out our deliverance from sin and eternal destruction. "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." "He took on him the seed of Abraham." Though he was "in the form of God," and "thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men." "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."* These last two passages, with others of a similar description, evidently imply the existence of Christ prior to his incarnation; and, on the hypothesis that he is a Divine person who assumed our nature with the gracious design of effecting salvation for us, they admit of a rational and easy explanation. But on the opposite hypothesis, that Christ is only man and had no existence before he was born into our world, I do not see how any interpretation of them can be given, which is not forced and unnatural. If

* Heb. ii. 14.—16.—Phil. ii. 6.—1 Tim. i. 15.—Luke xix. 10.

Christ had no being till his manifestation in the flesh, what propriety can there be in the expressions : “ God sent forth his Son ” — “ he gave his only begotten Son ” — “ He that cometh from above is above all ” — “ I am the living bread which came down from heaven ” — “ I go my way to him that sent me ” — “ What if ye should see the Son of man ascend up where he was before ” — “ The glory which I had with thee before the world was ? ” On any such assumption they are in the highest degree obscure ; and contain a phraseology which can be interpreted only by divesting it of its literal and obvious import.

3. From the Gospel we learn also, that Christ fulfilled the law, in the place of sinners, and bore the punishment due to our transgressions. “ He became,” says his Apostle, “ obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” His own words are, “ think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” Not only were the predictions of the Old Testament Scriptures verified in him, and the institutions of the ceremonial law by him conscientiously observed, but he perfectly obeyed all the precepts of the moral law. He was “ made under the law,”* as the Apostle’s expression is, that is, subject to its authority, under an obligation to obey it. Again, it is said, “ He took upon him the

* Gal. iv. 4. — John iii. 16. — John iii. 31. — John vi. 51. — John xvi. 5. — John vi. 62. & xvii. 5. — Phil. ii. 8. — Matt. v. 17. — Gal. iv. 4.

form of a servant." In this character he rendered a complete obedience to the law of God, the only perfect obedience indeed to that law which ever was performed in human nature. But this was not necessary to be done by the Son of God for himself. When he became a servant, it was for others. It was that he might obey for sinful men. He fulfilled the law that he might procure for them a perfect justifying righteousness. Hence his obedience is that by which we are said to be made righteous. And not only did Christ Jesus fully meet all the requirements of the law for sinners, he also suffered for them, sustaining in their stead its dreadful penalty. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all," is the language of the Prophet. "By his stripes we are healed. "Thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. He was cut off out of the land of the living, for the transgression of my people was he stricken." He was "made a curse for us." "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree."* Hence the gospel of Christ proclaims pardon and justification to men wholly for the sake of what Christ has done and suffered on their behalf. "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him

* Phil. ii. 7.—Isaiah liii. 6.—5.—10.—5.—8.—Gal. iii. 13.—
1 Peter ii. 24.

all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."*

4. Further, the Gospel teaches that holiness is communicated to men only by the Spirit of Christ our Saviour. The Holy Ghost sent by Christ into the hearts of sinners, is the Divine agent who produces there the spirit of true religion. It is his office to give to the disposition a new spiritual bias, to implant in the soul the principles of vital godliness, and to dispose the mind to the various habits, duties, and exercises of genuine Christianity. We are dead in sins till the Holy Spirit quicken us to righteousness. We are blind in spiritual things till he enlighten us

* Acts xiii. 38.—Romans v. 1.—8.—10.—
2 Cor. v. 19.—1 John ii. 1. & 2.

by his teaching. We are held fast by the fetters of ungodliness till he break the fetter and set us free. The Holy Spirit sanctifies men by leading them to Christ, uniting them to him by a living faith, and inclining them to rely on his grace, to glory in his cross, to abide in his truth, and to go on continually in his strength. "He," the Spirit of truth, "shall glorify me," is the testimony of the Lord Jesus, "for he shall receive of mine and shall shew it to you." "The fruit of the Spirit," declares the Apostle, "is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

5. In the Gospel the rich blessings of salvation are exhibited as the portion of all who truly believe. To renounce entirely our own righteousness, and to come with all our guilt and infirmity to Christ, trusting his willingness and power to wash away the former by his blood, and to remove the latter by his Spirit, is all that is required of us in order to obtain an abiding interest in that redemption, which is solely in him. The language of the Gospel is, "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life."*

In the *Second* place, I now proceed to shew that the public abettors of Socinianism are chargeable with the subversion of the Gospel. Not to notice

* John xvi. 14.—Gal. v. 22.—Acts xvi. 31.—John iii. 15.

other things which might be mentioned, I would call your attention to the following considerations.

1. The public abettors of Socinianism subvert the Gospel of Christ, by striking out from its doctrines the Divinity of its Author. The absolute Divinity of Jesus Christ is as conspicuous in the Scriptures of the New Testament, as is the meridian sun in the firmament of heaven. It is this which gives light, animation, consistency, power, and glory, to the whole system of evangelical truth. There is scarcely a doctrine of the gospel, which does not imply it. It shines forth in every promise which the gospel contains, and every blessing which is exhibited in the gospel has this for its foundation. How could Christ pardon the guilty? how could his blood cleanse from the polluting stains of sin? how could his obedience possess merit to justify unnumbered millions of hell-deserving transgressors? how could his grace have efficacy sufficient to heal the spiritual maladies of the soul, if he were not God? how could he enlighten the minds of all his people? how could he be present with all his followers? how could he protect, guide, and comfort those who look to him in every age, in every place? how could he supply the wants of all who call upon him? how could he honour the confidence of all who trust in his name, if he were not really and properly God? How could he be the light of the world? how could he be the shepherd of every believer? how could he be the Saviour of all

the ends of the earth, if he were not the eternal God? How could he exercise universal dominion, reigning over heaven, earth, and hell; how could he enrich all his churches with spiritual gifts and heavenly grace? how could he judge the world at the last day, execute vengeance on his enemies, and take his saints to heaven, if he were not possessed of essential Divinity? The supposition that these things could be true of him, and yet that every perfection of Deity should not be his, would be the height of absurdity. But all these things are said of Christ in the word of Him who cannot lie. The unavoidable conclusion is then, that he is *Jehevah Jesus*. Nor is this doctrine left to rest on the ground of mere inference for support, however sure the premises, however demonstrative the conclusion. The truth of it is established by positive and repeated declarations. The following testimonies are taken verbatim from the sacred page: "They shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted, is *God* with us." "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was *God*." "My *Lord* and my *God*! (the language of Thomas to his Divine Master) "Feed the church of *God* which he has purchased with his own blood." Of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, *God*, blessed for ever. Amen."* "In him

* Isaiah vii. 14.—John i. 1.—John xx. 28.—Acts xx. 28.
Rom. ix. 5.

dwelleth all the fulness of the *Godhead* bodily." "The great *God* and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." "Great is the mystery of Godliness, *God* was manifest in the flesh." "Unto the Son he saith, thy throne, O *God!* is for ever and ever." "This is the true *God* and eternal life."* But notwithstanding these testimonies, Dr. Priestley asserts that, "in no sense whatever, not even in the lowest of all, is Christ so much as called God in all the New Testament".† The promoters of Socinian doctrines deny the proper Godhead of Christ, and teach, that in nature and person he is only man, that he is as devoid of Divine perfections as you and I. But in doing this they flatly contradict Scripture, they make it impossible for the Son of God to be a spiritual and Almighty Redeemer; they take away that which gives atoning efficacy to his blood, inconceivable value to his obedience, unceasing prevalence to his intercession, divine stability to his promises, and everlasting security to his church. In a word, they undermine the hopes which his people in every generation have reposed in him. Say, then, whether they do not in this, overthrow the Gospel.

2. The public advocates of the Socinian system are guilty of subverting the Gospel of Christ, in setting

* Col. ii. 9.—Titus ii. 13.—1 Tim. iii. 16.—Psalm xlv. 6.
1. John v. 20.

† Letters to Mr. Burn, Letter 1.

aside the righteousness which it reveals for our justification. We cannot be just before God and find acceptance in his sight without a righteousness wholly perfect. No obedience will be able to procure for us an acquittal at the Divine tribunal which is not commensurate with every demand of the perfectly holy law of God, and unimpeachable before Him who cannot look upon the least sin but with infinite abhorrence. But the best saint on earth is altogether incapable of furnishing for himself an obedience thus complete. Where then is it to be found? Only in the finished work of Christ. The Gospel exhibits the Son of God performing it for sinners in his infinitely meritorious life and death. The righteousness which no flesh could procure for itself, Christ has wrought out and brought in for us. The Father is well pleased with what the Lord Jesus has done and suffered, and true believers are complete in him. This obedience is the only righteousness in which we can gain the approbation and smiles of heaven, the only righteousness provided, the only one revealed, and the only one which can avail for a sinner's justification. There is no want of explicitness in the language of the New Testament on this subject. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets." Justification by the obedience and death of Christ was

represented in the ceremonial law by types and figures, and was taught in the writings of Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other inspired men, whose sacred compositions are preserved in the Old Testament. "Even the righteousness of God," continues the Apostle, "which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe." "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness unto every one that believeth." "Of him ye are in Christ Jesus, who of God, is made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." "That I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ," that is, which faith in Christ apprehends, receives, and applies, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith."* But while we read in the Holy Scriptures of being made righteous in Christ, being complete in him, of having acceptance in the Beloved, of being justified freely by grace through

* Rom. iii. 20—22. v. 19. & x. 4.—1 Cor. i. 30—Phil. 3. 9—Rom. i. 16 & 17.

the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, they who are engaged in the propagation of Socinian theology, wholly object to the notion of Christ's obedience being placed to the account of believers for their justification, and teach men to trust for pardon and life, to the goodness of God and their own virtue. Thus the work of Christ, to accomplish which was his chief design in coming into the world, which the gospel so fully exhibits, to which it attaches such great importance, and which it so strongly recommends, is by them in the great and solemn affair of acceptance with Jehovah completely set aside. But since Revelation itself concludes "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law," then to speak or write against the obedience and death of Christ as the only sure basis of a sinner's hope at the bar of God, must be to overthrow the truth of the Bible in its essential principles.

3. The preachers of Socinianism are justly chargeable with subverting the Gospel, since, according to their tenets, many of those exercises and affections which Scripture arranges among our first and highest duties, are not only improper but sinful. Who that reads the New Testament with candour, can doubt for a moment, that it is our bounden duty to believe in Christ as a Divine person and an Almighty Saviour? Who that reads the discourses of our Lord and the writings of his Apostles, can hesitate for a moment to consider it his indispensable duty to love Christ

with supreme affection? Who can read either the Gospels or the Epistles without prejudice, and not see at once that Christ ought to be unreservedly trusted for spiritual and eternal life? Who can read the evangelical pages with a mind open to conviction, and not immediately perceive that we ought to come to Christ in prayer, to call upon him for mercy, grace, and salvation? Who can read what Christ both taught and did, and what his inspired messengers have left on record for the instruction of mankind, without being convinced that it is the duty of sinners to worship Christ equally with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and to devote themselves entirely to his glory? Are we not commanded to believe in him, that we may be saved by him? Do we not read of the primitive saints “trusting in Christ?” Are we not informed, that they “called upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours?” Did they not apply to him for spiritual and saving benefits? and is it not our duty to imitate them in every thing in which Revelation does not condemn their conduct? Are we not told that “all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father?” Is it not recorded by the pen of an Apostle, that when “he, that is the Father, bringeth his first begotten into the world, he saith, Let all the angels of God worship him?”* And does

* Eph. i. 12.—1 Cor. i. 2.—John v. 26.—
Heb. i. 6.

not another inspired Writer assure us, that all Heaven unites in ascribing "to the Lamb that was slain, power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing?"* A man cannot therefore obey many of the most important practical requirements of the Gospel, unless by faith he receive and confide in Christ as omnipotent to save, unless he humbly supplicate his adorable name, unless he unite with saints and angels in his worship, unless he love him with his whole heart, and unless he render him that service which is due to none but Jehovah. But if the doctrines maintained by Antitrinitarian ministers be true, the religious adoration of Christ, confidence in him for complete salvation, supreme attachment to his person, and unreserved obedience to his will, all which are so clearly taught in the Divine word, ought to be regarded as idolatrous. Judge then whether they who advocate opinions which conduct you to this inference, that both the precepts and examples of the Gospel lead men into idolatry, are not, to all intents and purposes, subverters of the Gospel.

4. Preachers of this class subvert the Gospel of Christ, by virtually taking away the spiritual and sanctifying aid which it offers. The Gospel is a system adapted to our manifold infirmities as fallen creatures. It addresses us as having no power nor

* Rev. v. 12.

strength in ourselves for the right performance of duties, and as being reduced by sin to a condition, in a spiritual respect altogether weak and helpless. This being our state, it does not mock human frailty by merely communicating to us instructions and precepts which we have no ability to put into practice. At the same time that it teaches us our duty, it holds out for our encouragement the promise and the sufficiency of Divine assistance. As it shews that true religion in the mind and character is begun and carried forward to perfection by the operations of the Holy Spirit in the soul, as it directs us to pray for the Spirit, and earnestly to desire his gifts and influences, so it contains the most encouraging declarations, that if we seek and sincerely wish for the heavenly benefit, all grace will be caused to abound in our experience. A Christian is required “to walk by faith, not by sight,” “to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ, “to watch and pray, that he enter not into temptation,” “to strive against sin, to subdue and mortify the corruptions of his nature, to resist the devil, to overcome the world, to adorn his profession of the Gospel, and to persevere in the ways of religion.”* For these, however, and all other spiritual exercises of the Christian calling, he is quite insufficient, except so far as he is, to use the Apostle’s expression, “strengthened with might by the Spirit

* 2 Cor. v. 7.—Matt. xvi. 24.—xxvi. 41.

in the inner man." In order then fully to qualify him for a life of faith and holy obedience, the indwelling and aid of the Holy Ghost, are graciously promised to the saints. "I will put my Spirit within you," says Jehovah to his people, "and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." "If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father, give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him." "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." "It is God who worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure." "He who hath begun a good work in you, will be performing it until the day of Jesus Christ."*

But Antitrinitarian Instructors of mankind say, that there is no Holy Spirit possessing distinct personality and exerting a regenerating, sanctifying influence on the minds of men. They refuse to acknowledge the personal subsistence of the Spirit of God, and wholly discard from Christianity the doctrine of his renewing agency. Thus, according to them, there is no such thing as those gracious assistances which the penitent sinner and the humble believer

* Eph. iii. 16.—Ezekiel xxxvi. 27.—Luke xi. 13.—Rom. viii. 26.—Phil. ii. 13. & i. 6.

are warranted by revelation to expect from his presence and inward operation. There is no Divine Comforter sent by the Father and the Son to guide the Church into all the truth, and to abide with believers for ever. The idea of internal effectual aid, administered by invincible grace, to enable us to forsake sin, to follow holiness, to cleave to Christ and to live near to God, to prepare us for heaven and conduct us safe to glory, is a delusion. This is their representation. The supernatural help offered by the gospel is taken away, and poor sinful man is left to struggle with iniquity, to fight against Satan, to oppose the world, and through every difficulty and in defiance of every foe to press on his way to heaven, only in his own inherent strength. Now, if you compare this representation with the Scriptures, I cannot think that you will have any difficulty in declaring it to be a subversion of the glorious gospel.

5. They who teach the doctrines of Modern Socinianism, subvert the Gospel by destroying the freeness of its terms. The only terms of salvation as proclaimed and offered in the New Testament are included in the acceptance of free grace. "Take the water of life freely" is the inscription written over the entrance into the temple of mercy. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."*

* Rev. xxii. 17.—Isaiah lv. 1.

All who come are welcome, and welcome in the same degree. None are admitted to mercy because of their comparative superiority to others. Nor are any rejected because they are more notoriously vile than others. The merit or demerit of the individual is of no consideration at all in this matter. It is free grace which gives the invitation and receives the applicants, and this grace makes all who obey its condescending call, alike welcome. All are unworthy—none therefore can be admitted because they deserve salvation or have any, the least, claim to it, but only on account of the grace of its Author: consequently, though there may be some difference in the degree of unworthiness attending those who make application for mercy, yet that can cause no difference at all in the freeness of the welcome with which they are received; because that welcome originates in a source altogether independent of the comparative worthiness or unworthiness of the creature, even in the good pleasure of the Saviour, the “exceeding riches of his grace.” It is not of him “that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.”* All, then, who come to Christ in the exercise of faith and repentance are welcome; the polite and the vulgar, the virtuous and the vile, the accomplished lady and the shameless prostitute, the prince and the beggar, are cordially received with the smiles

* Eph. ii. 7.—Rom. ix. 16.

of infinite love on exactly the same ground, the free grace of God in Christ Jesus. This is a free grace salvation. Here is encouragement for the vilest sinner on earth to turn unto God. And none will be offended at this doctrine but the proud and self-righteous.

But the Unitarians, as they denominate themselves, preach another gospel, which is not another, but a subversion of the true gospel. They presume to make human virtue meritorious in the sight of God as a recommendation of our persons to him, as a price for his favour and benefits; and they teach, that men will be accepted and saved on account of their moral qualities and personal excellencies. Admit this, and you give at once a fatal blow to the freeness of the gospel. Salvation is no more "by grace" but "according to our works." Yet while the propagators of Socinian opinions instruct men to build their hopes on this foundation, they will tell you at the same time that we are saved by grace. But "by grace" they mean not free favour, pardoning and justifying the guilty for its own sake, out of mere unmerited kindness through Jesus Christ, which is evidently the Apostle's sense of the term, but divine goodness shewing due regard to the merits of the creature, passing by our sins in consideration of our services. This, however, is to use the *word* while you renounce the *idea*. It is an attempt to blend grace and

works—an impracticable thing! They involve principles essentially distinct and irreconcilable; and therefore one cannot be admitted in any degree, without completely invalidating and overturning the other. According to the Apostle, “If by grace it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then it is no more grace; otherwise work is no more work.”*

In the *Third* place, It was proposed to lay before you a few considerations from which it might be inferred, that the public abettors of Socinianism have no right to the appellation of Christian Ministers.

1. They do not acknowledge the character of Christ as it is revealed in the written word. The Scriptures make the Lord Jesus known to us as the Creator of the world, as the Governor of all things, as possessing every possible perfection, but especially as saving sinners from eternal death by his sacrifice, intercession, spirit, and word. But these gentlemen reject the Son of God under every one of these views of his character, and confine themselves in all that they advance concerning him to his virtues as a good man ; his wisdom as a teacher sent from God, though not necessarily infallible ; his peculiar endowments as chief among the Prophets of God ; and his zeal as a martyr.

* Rom. xi. 6.

2. The truth of Christ has few attractions for them. A great part of that truth they entirely disown. They take all pains to dispossess Revelation of almost every doctrine peculiar to the Christian scheme. They do not receive the word of Christ in love, but betray on every occasion a rooted dislike to it in almost every particular. They assail the doctrine of Christ in its main points, and do all in their power to oppose it. The very doctrines which Christ himself taught they disregard, or they so explain his expressions as to cause their substantial meaning entirely to disappear. I mean the remission of sins through the shedding of his blood, his possession of Divine power, his prerogative to give eternal life, the necessity of regeneration, our inability to do any thing spiritually good without him, the necessity of receiving him by faith in order to our having spiritual life, expressed in those remarkable words, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood ye have no life in you,"* the security of his sheep, and the eternal misery of the wicked in a future state.

3. They never make known the salvation which Christ has to bestow, to accomplish which he became a sojourner on the earth, to procure which he suffered and died, to dispense which he now lives and reigns in heaven, and to proclaim which is the chief delight and the constant duty of every minister of Jesus.

* John vi. 53.

How glorious the theme! A salvation which is founded on his atonement. A salvation which he applies by his Spirit! A salvation which includes deliverance from sin and misery of every description, and exaltation to the holiness and felicity of heaven!

4. Their manner of preaching differs essentially from that of the Apostles. From the Acts of the Apostles and from their several Epistles, it is very evident that in apostolic preaching Christ, in the Divinity of his person as well as his humanity, in the infinitude of his love, in the vicarious nature of his undertaking and death, in the unsearchable riches of his grace, in the glories of his exaltation, and in the incomprehensible value of his benefits, was the grand topic—the delightful theme. “We preach Christ crucified,” said the Apostle Paul, and again: “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified.” What was it that called forth from him the liveliest expressions of gratitude? It was, that to him, though “less than the least of all saints, this grace was given, that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.”* If Christ were preached, even though it were from contention, he rejoiced and would rejoice. Because he knew that when Christ was the grand subject, there was not only a probability, but a certainty, that good would be effected; whereas,

* 1 Cor. i. 23.—1 Cor. ii. 2.—Eph. iii. 8.

should he be neglected or omitted, whatever parade of learning, whatever display of eloquence, whatever acuteness of criticism, whatever strength of reasoning might be employed, no conversion of sinners would take place. To display the love and grace of Christ in redemption, to speak of his sufferings, death, and resurrection, with the blessings and glory of his kingdom; to exhibit him to the view of perishing mortals in all his pleasing characters and important offices; to expatiate on his ability and willingness to save, and to urge on sinners an immediate application to him, acceptance of him, and reliance on him, were to the Apostles subjects and modes of preaching of unutterable importance. But when are Antitrinitarian ministers known to dwell on these topics? When do they speak much of Christ, unless to controvert prevailing opinions of him and to lower him in the estimation of their hearers? They call him our Saviour, occasionally. They propose him as an example also; but when do they make him the foundation of our hopes, speak of him as the only way and the only name through which we must be saved, treat largely on his character and offices, and dwell with animation on his redeeming love? When do they urge their audience to flee to him and depend on him for pardon, life, and salvation?

Now view these four things together—Socinian teachers refuse to acknowledge the revealed character of Christ—they discard a great part of his truth—

they never proclaim and recommend his salvation, and their manner of preaching differs essentially from that of the Apostles, and then say, whether there be any great hazard in affirming, that they are not entitled to the appellation of Christian ministers. Do they not themselves tell that Christ has not sent them? that they are not his servants? We may be fully assured, that if a man do not preach Christ in the strain and manner of the New Testament, it is because he has no commission. When Christ sends a man to preach his name, if earth and hell were to oppose him, they could not divert him from his course, and he is "immortal till his work is done." The very stones might as soon cry out, as that man refrain from publishing the grace, and glory, and worth of Christ. Others, then, who level Christ through the whole of his existence to the rank of human nature, leave man for acceptance to his own merit, and make no mention of the power, agency, and work of the Holy Spirit in their ministrations, you may call "Moral Teachers;" but if, as has been said, it be but right to call things by their proper names, then "Christian Ministers" is an appellation to which they can never fairly lay claim, to which they ought never to aspire.

In the *Fourth* place, In coming to a conclusion, my friends, I exhort you all to "buy the truth and sell it not."* It is able to save your souls; and if

* Prov. xxiii. 23.

you receive it rightly, it will be the “power of God to your salvation.”* Perhaps you are saying, the advice is good, but how shall we find the truth? there is so much diversity of opinion on the subject, how shall we know what is right and what is wrong? There is the Bible in your pew, in your house, in your hand: open it, consult it, read it over and over in a truly teachable spirit, often praying fervently for wisdom from above that you may understand it, and I dare stake my eternal salvation on the certainty of your soon knowing the truth as it is in Jesus. I address you in the words of Solomon, in the second chapter of the Proverbs: “My son, if thou wilt receive my words and hide my commandments with thee, so that thou *incline* thine ear unto wisdom and *apply thine heart* to understanding; yea, if thou *criest* after knowledge and *lifest up thy voice* for understanding; if thou *seekest* her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and *find* the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom; out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.” If any one seek to depreciate the Scriptures or any part of them in your esteem, dread him, shun his discourse and society as you would fear and avoid the pestilence. Never forget that a holy state of mind is an essential requisite

Rom. i. 16.

to make a proficiency in the school of Christ. A mind in love with sin is a mind also blinded by sin, so that it cannot see the truth. The light will shine in the darkness, but the darkness will not comprehend or discern it. A mind prepossessed with the love of any error, is a mind also perverted by error, and so enslaved by its own darling prejudices, that it cannot emancipate itself from bondage and follow the truth whithersoever it may lead. A mind in love with the world, is already so occupied with earthly trifles, that there is no room for the truth of God, and it cannot therefore enter. "If any man is resolved to do his will," says the Saviour, "he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."* Holy affections, and an eye continually directed to the Spirit of God in prayer and dependence for his direction, ensure our guidance to a clear and improving acquaintance with the truth of the Gospel in all essential things, forward every important object of genuine piety, and promote cheerful obedience, communion with God, and steady, happy progress in the way to heaven. Beware of an over-anxious and speculative spirit in religion. Beware of meddling with things that are above your reach. Beware of preferring points merely doctrinal, to practical and experimental subjects. Seek to encrease in

religious knowledge every day, and always endeavour to put the knowledge you have previously gained to its right use in experience and practical godliness. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he seemeth to have."*

* Matt. xiii. 12. & Luke viii. 18.

LECTURE IX.



THE SUBORDINATION OF CHRIST TO HIS FATHER.

JOHN xiv. 28.

“My Father is greater than I.”

THE supreme Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ has been regarded, in every age of the Christian church, as a capital doctrine of the Bible. It is a truth also which has always had its adversaries; and in the present day it is zealously spoken against by many. The opponents of this doctrine adduce, in support of their disbelief of it and in justification of their hostility, the words which I have now read. “If,” say they with an air of confidence, “the Father be greater than Christ,” as the Redeemer himself in this place asserts, “then it is impossible that Christ should be truly and properly God.”

At first view the words of the text may seem to warrant this conclusion, especially if they are made a separate and independent declaration, and are not explained with a due regard to the connection in which they stand, and to other parts of the sacred writings, which we may safely affirm they will not contradict.

But these words may not only serve the Arian and the Socinian as a pretext for their rejection of our Lord's Divinity ; they may also, in some degree, perplex the mind of the humble and sincere believer. And, moreover, they may be employed by the ever-active enemies of truth as a plausible and too successful means of winning over to the adoption of dangerous errors, the unsuspecting and unguarded inquirer.

It is then, I presume, no departure from his proper sphere, for a minister of the word of God to endeavour to set this passage in a proper light, and by a Scriptural illustration of it to attempt to shew, that it affords no real ground whatever of resistance to the essential Deity of the Son of God ; but that it is perfectly consistent with all that the sacred volume advances on that vitally important subject. The Christian teacher may hope in this way to be the instrument, if not of convincing the confirmed unbeliever of his error, yet of exposing the fallacies of sophistry, of removing the scruples of the doubtful, and of establishing the truth as it is in Jesus on its legitimate basis, namely, the right interpretation of Scripture.

Before I proceed to a more particular exposition of the text, I have to observe in general, that it furnishes of itself no decisive evidence at all on the question of the Saviour's Divinity, inasmuch as it makes not the slightest mention of the *kind* of superiority which it ascribes to the Father. If the Lord Jesus had said, "My Father is greater than I in nature," or, "My Father is greater than I in perfections," then the passage would have supplied a testimony completely decisive against the proper Deity of the Messiah, and would have exhibited incontrovertible proof, that if not a mere man, he was at the most a mere creature. But there are various kinds of superiority. And parties possessing the same nature, may be superior or inferior in *other* respects. An *essential* identity of two or more individuals with one another by no means makes it impossible for them to be respectively greater or less in a *circumstantial* point of view. As therefore the text contains no declaration of the *species* or *kind* of superiority which belongs to the Father, it leaves the point of the Redeemer's Divinity entirely untouched. It affords the Socinian not the least support for his opinions concerning the person of Christ, unless he can prove the two following things. He must prove that the Father is greater than the Son in *one respect only*, and that *this* is in point of *nature*; or, that it is superiority of nature, and *this alone* which is intended in the text. Till the opposer of the Godhead of Christ

has clearly and fully established these positions, the passage under consideration leaves us in full possession of the doctrine of the Saviour's Deity. So that if ever that doctrine be disproved, the object will remain to be accomplished, not by the passage before us, but by other parts of the word of inspiration. He who in denying the Divinity of Immanuel would lay much stress on the words, "My Father is greater than I," either has never duly considered them, or he betrays the utter weakness of his cause, by thus having recourse to a declaration of Scripture so completely incapable of furnishing him with one solid argument for overturning the leading article of our faith. There is nothing in this saying of our Lord which in the least controverts the position that Christ is Jehovah, unless the Saviour means that he is inferior to the Father in nature. But that this is his meaning, may we not safely pronounce it impossible for any man to prove?

There is another instance of fallacious reasoning very common among Socinians, and for noticing which this may be the most proper place. I allude to their practice of proceeding with a great deal of formality to found an argument against the proper Godhead of Jesus on those parts of Scripture in which he is denominated man. Now I would ask, putting the question to Antitrinitarians themselves, from what principle of argumentation does it appear that Christ is not God because he is man? If they will produce

from the sacred writings one passage where it is declared or fairly implied that Christ is *only* man, then we will give up the point of his Divinity at once. When the Bible speaks of the manhood of the Redeemer, it confirms our sentiments respecting his Person, but it does not in the least militate against the opinions which we entertain respecting him. For we believe in the proper humanity of the Lord Jesus, as firmly as the same doctrine is maintained by our opponents. But while we can easily bring numerous passages, which, either by positive assertion or by clear undoubted implication prove that the Saviour is *God* as well as man, I know not a single sentence in the Scriptures which either says or *supposes* that he is *only* man. Yet, till the advocates for Socinianism have adduced some passage or passages, either asserting or implying that Jesus is man only, or that he is not God, they have done nothing to disprove his proper Deity. Because various texts of Scripture assert or speak of his proper humanity, to argue that, therefore, he does not possess essential Divinity, is a mode of ratiocination, which to call reasoning is not only to misapply, but to degrade the term. On that principle of reasoning you might prove concerning any object, that because it is one thing, therefore it cannot be another also. You may prove of any man, that because he has an animal nature, therefore he is not a rational being; or because he has a body, therefore he cannot have a

soul. It is from other parts of the Scriptures alone, that the import of our text can be satisfactorily ascertained. I proceed, therefore,

In the *First* place, To shew from the Scriptures, that the Saviour cannot mean in these words that he is inferior to the Father in nature :

And, *Secondly*, To define and illustrate that inferiority, which, according to the Scriptures, does belong to Christ.

In the *First* place, We are to shew from the word of God, that the Saviour cannot mean in the text that he is inferior to the Father in nature. And why is it impossible that this should be his meaning? The Redeemer cannot intend an inferiority to the Father in nature,

1. Because that meaning would be inconsistent with his own express declarations in other places. In the 18th of Matthew and the 20th verse, the Lord Jesus says, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now attend to the plain import of this passage. Here is a promise given by Christ to his Church, directly implying on his part the perfections of omnipresence and immutability. It will not be said by any one, I presume, that it is the corporeal, and therefore it must be the spiritual presence of Christ that is here promised to his followers, his presence by his influence assisting, strengthening, comforting, sanctifying, and blessing his churches. Jesus however could not

be thus in the midst of his congregated people wherever they assemble in his name, unless he were an omnipresent Saviour, and the same from age to age. But omnipresence and immutability are perfections of the Divine nature ; and, therefore, according to these his own words, Christ is in nature equal to the Father.

In the 28th chapter of Matthew and the 18th verse, our Lord says to his disciples, "all power is given to me in heaven and in earth." Observe the subject of this affirmation: 'All power in heaven and in earth.' No one will deny that all power in heaven and in earth is omnipotence, Almighty power. Well, this is given to Christ. But how is it given to him? Is it given to him in the sense of communication or bestowment as something which he did not before possess? That is impossible. Because omnipotence is an incommunicable perfection of Jehovah. Almighty power is peculiar to the ever-blessed God and cannot be given to a creature. The meaning is, that by the Father, our Lord Jesus in his mediatorial person and capacity, and for the accomplishment of mediatorial purposes, is entrusted with the exercise of omnipotence. But mark the consequence of this. It follows indisputably that Christ is essentially omnipotent. He could not have the exercise of this perfection unless he had been in possession of it. But if he possessed Almighty power at any given point of time, he possessed it

originally and from eternity; because, as we have already said, and no one will controvert the truth of the position, that it is incommunicable. I conclude then, that this testimony of the Lord Jesus indisputably proves him to be a partaker of the same infinite nature or essence as the Father.

The words of Christ to which I next refer you, are in the second chapter of the Gospel of John, from the 19th verse, compared with those in the tenth chapter of John the 17th and 18th verses: "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Then said the Jews, "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?" "But he spake," says the inspired Evangelist, "of the temple of his body." The other passage is, "I lay down my life that I might take it up again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again." From these sayings of our Lord, two things are evident.

1. That Christ was the proprietor of his own life. But this infinitely surpasses whatever is included in the rights of mere creatures. He would not have been the *Lord* of life, the Lord not even of his *own* life, had he not been self-existent and the author of life to the whole animate part of creation.

2. That he was the adorable author of his resurrection from the dead. "Destroy this temple," this temple of my body, "and in three days I will raise

it up." "I lay down my life that I might take it again. I have *power* to lay it down, and I have *power* to take it again." But to raise the dead is the exclusive prerogative of Jehovah. It is God only who raiseth the dead. For a man who is dead to be raised to life by another even when possessing life in all its vigour, is universally allowed to be infinitely above all that human agency can accomplish. Surely then the man Christ Jesus, who, when under the power of death, accomplished his own resurrection, afforded to mankind by that astonishing instance of his Divine power the most convincing, overwhelming evidence that he was not man only, but also the eternal God. These passages then conduct us also to the plain and obvious inference, that Christ and the Father are in nature equal.

In the first chapter of the Revelation and the 11th verse, the Redeemer says, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last,"* and in the second chapter of the same book and the 18th verse, he expresses himself in similar terms: "These things saith the first and the last, who was dead and is alive."

* On this passage, the amiable and candid Dr. Doddridge has, in his Family Expositor, the following note: "That these titles should be repeated so soon in a connexion which demonstrates they are given to Christ, will appear very remarkable, whatever sense be given to the 8th verse.—And I cannot forbear recording it, that this text has done more than any other in the Bible, towards preventing me from giving into that scheme which would make our Lord Jesus Christ no more than a deified creature.

Here is the attribute of eternity claimed by our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Alpha and the Omega, that is, the first cause and the last end of all things. He is from eternity to eternity. But this attribute is the perfection of Jehovah alone. Hence the language of God by the Prophet Isaiah: "Thus saith the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of Hosts, I am the first and I am the last."* Would Christ then have appropriated to himself these distinctive titles of Jehovah, had he been inferior to the Father in nature and not equal with him? I leave you to answer. In the second chapter of the Revelation and the 23rd verse, the adorable Saviour says, "All the churches shall know that I am he who searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." These words of Christ ought to be compared with those of the Almighty by the Prophet Jeremiah, in the 17th chapter of his prophecies, the 9th and 10th verses: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" "I Jehovah," it is added, "search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to the fruit of his doings." Every one allows it to be the exclusive prerogative of God to search the heart, to know what is in man. But Jesus declares that he searches the heart. Is not this then assuring us in effect, that he is omni-

* Isaiah xliv. 6.

scient, that in Divine perfection he and the Father are the same ?

In the chapter out of which our text is taken, the 9th verse, the Mediator in answer to Philip's request, " Lord shew us the Father and it sufficeth us," says, " Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?" " He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father ; and how sayest thou then, shew us the Father ? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" If these words do not mean that the Father and the Son, though personally distinct, are essentially the same, then it is difficult, nay more, I may say, it is impossible to assign to them any meaning but what is far-fetched and unnatural.

In the 16th chapter of John, Jesus says, " all things that the Father hath are mine." If the perfections of the Divine eternal Father are not Christ's, then surely the Redeemer spoke in a manner the most unguarded, and directly calculated to mislead his hearers, by giving them the most erroneous conceptions of his person and character. Whether he did so or not you shall judge.

I shall now only refer you further to the declarations of the Messiah, recorded in the 10th chapter of John, from the 27th verse ; " My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.

My Father who gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand: I and my Father are one." One in what? The preceding verses furnish an answer to this question. One in authority and love, to confer eternal life; one in wisdom, and power, and goodness, to defend from every moral danger, and every spiritual foe; and one in ability to afford everlasting security to his followers; in other words, one in nature, one in every Divine perfection.

Now it is on the ground of what Christ Jesus himself has advanced in the foregoing testimonies, that I affirm it impossible for him to mean in the text, that he is inferior to the Father in nature. You see that this cannot be his meaning, unless it be possible for him to contradict himself; unless he has taught in this *one* place what is essentially different from his instructions in *many* places. But no man who deserves to be reasoned with on this subject will be prepared to admit, that there is the least contradiction in the word of Christ. He is "the faithful and true witness." He is the "wisdom of God," and all that he has said is entirely consistent one part with another, and every part with all the rest.

Secondly, Jesus Christ cannot in the text mean an inferiority of nature to the Father, because such a sense would be contrary to the general *tenor* of *Revelation*. The following selection of passages indicates the language of inspiration concerning Christ, in the

Old Testament Scriptures: "Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old as doth a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called, Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God." "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." "Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch; and a King shall reign and prosper; and shall execute judgment and justice on the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our righteousness."* Here you see it is Jehovah who is the speaker, and it is Jehovah who is promised. "Behold I will send my messenger, and he shall

* Psalm xlv. 6 & 7.—cii. 25—27.—Isaiah ix. 6.—xl. 3.—Jer. xxiii. 5 & 6.

prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold he shall come, saith Jehovah of Hosts." The last passage is very remarkable, especially if you read in connection the first and last clauses, "behold *I* send *my* messenger and he shall prepare the way before *me*, saith Jehovah of Hosts." There can be no doubt that the messenger is John the Baptist, and that the speaker whose messenger he is declared to be, by whom he was sent and whose way he was sent to prepare, is Christ himself. But the Prophet calls him, "Jehovah of Hosts."* This is an undeniable proof that Christ is the infinite and eternal God. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of the Divine Being, denoting his self-existence, independence, immutability, and eternity. It is a name, therefore, which is never given in the Scriptures but either to God absolutely, or to some one of the Divine Persons, and which to use in any other appropriation would be blasphemy the most awful.

When the term Jehovah occurs in the foregoing quotations, I have used it because *that* is the word in the original, which circumstance, in the authorized version, our translators have marked, by causing the term Lord, (which is their rendering of the Hebrew in all these and similar places) to be printed in capital letters.

* Malachi iii. 1.

In now glancing at the New Testament representations of the Redeemer, it is worthy of our observation, that here he is called, "The Son of God." "The Prince of life." "The King of kings, and the Lord of lords." "The Lord of glory." "The Lord of all." Here we find him denominated, "the true God." "The great God," and "over all, God blessed for ever."* Here creation is ascribed to him, redemption is shewn to be obtained by him, and he is revealed as exercising universal dominion. Here we are informed, that all the angels of God were commanded to worship him ; and it is declared that all *men* should honour the Son even as they honour the Father. Here he is said to raise the dead, to have the keys of the invisible world, to be able to save to the uttermost, and here he is made known as he who will judge the world at the last day. Surely then, according to the whole tenor of Scripture, Christ and the Father are equal in nature, and no essential inferiority could be intended by Jesus in the text, without contradicting the general strain of Divine revelation. But all the parts of this blessed book harmonize : it is not, therefore, with respect to nature, it must be in some other sense that the Father is greater than the Divine eternal Son.

In the *Second* place, I now proceed to define and illustrate that inferiority to the Father, which, accord-

* 1 John iii. 8.—Acts iii. 15.—Rev. xix. 16.—1. Cor. ii. 8.—Acts x. 36.—1 John v. 20.—Titus ii. 13. Rom, ix, 5.

ing to the Scriptures, is attributable to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Redeemer says, "my Father is greater than I;" and his words are undoubtedly true. This declaration contains a truth Divinely glorious. Our whole salvation depends on what the Saviour here asserts. Except for Christ's inferiority to the Father, we could have no hope. This fact constitutes the only sure basis of salvation for sinners, and in an eminent degree advances the glory of God.

In attempting to explain these words, I do not refer the expression to the human nature of Christ. Some explain the passage by saying, that Jesus considered as man, is inferior to the Father. Perhaps this idea is very generally entertained among Christians relative to the phraseology in question. But, I cannot myself acquiesce in that interpretation. I think it is liable to serious objection. The mere human nature of our Lord Jesus is not Christ; neither is his Divine nature only. Christ is man: that expression is correct; but his mere human nature is not *Christ*. Christ is God: that expression also, is unexceptionable; but his Divine nature only is not *Christ*: that is, either his Divine or human nature considered apart from the other. Christ is God and man *united*. It is the *two* natures in *union*, not blended, but *united*, so as to constitute one person. Immanuel is essentially both God and man in one and the same person. If you lose sight of the two natures as existing together, you lose sight of Christ. This is the scriptural

idea of Christ. Any expression that opposes this idea is, so far as that opposition extends, anti-scriptural. Of this description, in my opinion, is the assertion, that Christ, considered as man only, is inferior to the Father. There is no such thing as the mere human nature of Christ. His mere human nature, that is, as I understand the phrase, his human nature considered apart from his Divine nature, can have no existence except in imagination. If you duly consider the subject, I think you will perceive the correctness of this representation. If I mistake not, the Scriptures never speak of Jesus in his mediatorial character as man *only* or as God *only*. They always speak of him as God and man in one person united. His name is Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.

In explaining this declaration of the Saviour, "My Father is greater than I," some say, that Christ is inferior to the Father in the order of personal subsistence. The Father is the first, the Son is the second, and the Holy Ghost is the third person in the Godhead. That Christ is second to the Father in the order of personal distinction, is, I believe, denied by none who admit the doctrine of a triune Jehovah. Nor does this, as far as I can perceive, imply any inferiority of nature. But that this is the kind of inferiority intended in the text, I should not feel confidence enough to assert. At least it is a signification to which I should be disposed to attach little or no importance.

The Bible is its own and its best interpreter. The sacred volume furnishes abundant matter for a rational, consistent, easy, and interesting interpretation of the passage before us. Look, my friends, at the economy of grace intimately connected with the mediatorial Person of Christ, and exhibited in the gospel. Look at the glorious plan of salvation through the incarnation, obedience, sufferings, death, intercession, and grace of the Son of God. There you will behold a clear and full explication of the words which we are now considering. Christ is inferior to the Father in official character as Mediator between God and men. This inferiority the Lord Jesus voluntarily assumed, in order that by obeying and suffering in our place he might bring us back to God, introduce us to the favour of Heaven, and establish us in the enjoyment of endless life. This inferiority assumed by him for these gracious purposes, is prominent throughout the Scriptures. In every part of the mediatorial scheme of mercy to accomplish salvation for guilty man, it is evidently supposed. And the gradual developement and accomplishment of the glorious plans of grace illustrate its success, and from age to age exemplify more and more its happy and triumphant effects, in advancing to heaven and glory millions of Adam's fallen race.

In the economy of mercy and life, planned by infinite wisdom and executed by infinite love, the Father always appears as holding the place and sustaining

the honours of offended Deity—the Son as standing in the room of the guilty offending creature: the Father maintains the rights of injured justice—it is the part of the Son to satisfy that justice: the Father insists on the vindication of his law—the Son magnifies the law and makes it honourable: the Father requires the punishment of sin—the Son provides for its expiation by bearing it in his own body on the tree. In these circumstances the Father is officially greater than the Son. He holds a higher official character. The Father is supreme; the Son is subordinate.

The Scriptures teach us in general, that Christ is the servant of the Father: “Behold,” says God, speaking of Jesus Christ, “my *servant*, whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my *servant*, to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.” “My righteous *servant* shall justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.” In the New Testament we read of Christ, that “he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a *servant*.”* But if our Lord Jesus is the servant of the Father, then, in that view of his character, the Father is greater than he, as he who is served is in

* Isaiah xlii. 1.—xlix. 6.—liii. 11.—Phil. ii. 7.

that capacity greater than the person who serves him.

1. As Mediator, Christ received his appointment from the Father. He was set apart in the counsels of infinite love from eternity to the work of Mediator. Hence, "his goings forth," are said to be "from of old, from everlasting." He is said to have been "fore-ordained, before the foundation of the world," and he is called, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." He also himself says, that "he was set up from everlasting." But by whom was he thus set apart? The subject answers this question for itself. Doubtless by the Father. He is not a self-appointed Mediator; and in eternity there could be none to appoint him to this high office but his Father.

2. As Mediator he was sent by the Father into the world. "The Father," says he, "hath sent me." "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law." "The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." Our Lord himself, addressing his Father, employs these expressions: "Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." "That the world may know that thou hast sent me."*

3. As Mediator, the divine Redeemer came to do the will of his Father, and acted in all things in

* Micah v. 2.—1 Peter i. 20.—Rev. xiii. 8.—Proverbs viii. 23.—John v. 36.—Gal. iv. 4.—1 John iv. 14. & 10.—John xvii. 3. & 23.

entire subjection to his authority. Speaking in anticipation of his appearance in the world, Christ says, in the 40th Psalm, "Lo! I come; in the volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God! yea, thy law is within my heart." When on earth, he gave this account of himself and the object of his mission: "I came not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." Hence also he speaks to his Father, of "the work which he had given him to do." This work was to teach the will of God, to obey the law in the stead of sinners, to make atonement for the guilt of his church, to vanquish Satan, and to procure eternal life for his followers. "Think not," says he, "that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil." "The Son of man is come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."* This office the Father gave to our Lord Jesus to discharge, in order that he might become the Author of salvation to the guilty. The curse of a violated law and the want of a perfect righteousness, were obstacles in the way of our salvation, wholly insur-

* John vi. 38.—xvii. 4.—Matt. v. 7.—xx. 28.—xxvi. 28.—
John x. 10.

mountable to all but the Son of God. The stipulation therefore between him and his Father was, "that if his soul should make a propitiatory sacrifice, he should see a seed which should prolong their days, and the gracious purpose of Jehovah should prosper in his hands. Of the travail of his soul he should see the fruit, and be satisfied."†

4. As Mediator, Jesus Christ was accepted of the Father. The Father signified his satisfaction and pleasure in what the Saviour had done and suffered, by raising him from the dead, and by receiving him to his own right hand in heaven. This was a public declaration to angels and men, of the Father's acceptance of Immanuel's work.

Lastly, As Mediator, the Redeemer receives his reward from the Father. "Because," says the Father by the Prophet Isaiah, "Because he poured out his soul unto death and was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sins of many, therefore will I distribute to him the many for his portion, and the mighty people shall he share for his spoil."‡ "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."* As "he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore," says the Apostle, "God also hath highly

† Lowth's Version of Isaiah.—‡ Ditto.

* Isaiah liii. 12.—Psalm ii. 8.

exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* This is the glorious reward of his humiliation. Now in these particulars you see the idea and character of official subordination of the Son to the Father, exhibited throughout. In the great work of salvation he is the servant of the Father, appointed by him, commissioned by him, faithful to him, accepted of him, and by him at last rewarded.

If you candidly and impartially examine the words before us in their connexion, and consider well the circumstances in which they were uttered, you will say, I think, that it was of himself as *Mediator*, that the Lord Jesus spoke, and that the subordination here intended is entirely of an official nature, that which belongs to him as his Father's servant and his people's advocate, for the purposes of complete redemption to all who truly believe in his name. This was the time of his humiliation. He was yet engaged in the work which his Father had given him to do. That work however was nearly finished. The period of his service on earth was so near its close, that he had begun to apprise his disciples that his departure was just at hand. He was about to return to the Father,

* I hil. ii. 8-11.

about to receive his reward, about to enter on his state of glorious exaltation in heaven, about to commence his mediatorial reign, in which both he and they were so interested, that had they duly apprehended it, and had he been the object of their wisely directed love, the mention of his departure would, instead of making them sorry, have excited their liveliest joy. The Father was greater than he ; therefore by going to the Father, his condition would be happily reversed. *Here* he was despised, rejected, hated, and persecuted ; but *there* he would be raised to infinite glory and blessedness ; and having prepared a place for his people, would come again at length to receive them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also.

This official inferiority of Christ to the Father is seen in all the mediatorial titles of the Lord Jesus. It appears also in all his dispensations as Mediator. It is prominently apparent in his prophetic, priestly, and regal characters. We see it in all his appearances to the Patriarchs, and in every manifestation of himself to and on behalf of the church under the Mosaic economy. It shines forth in his actual assumption of our nature, in his baptism by John, in his temptation in the wilderness, in his subjection to the law, in his perfect fulfilment of it, in the sufferings he endured, in his agony in the garden, in his bloody sweat, in his crucifixion, in his death and burial, and in the

object of his ascension to heaven to intercede for his people.

But so far is the Saviour from exhibiting in his subordination any thing that implies inferiority to the Father in nature, that he exhibits through the whole of it the displays and proofs of his absolute and essential divinity. The circumstances which distinguished his birth, the manner in which he taught, the authority with which he spoke, the miracles he performed in his own name and by his own power, his knowledge of the thoughts both of his disciples and his enemies, his control over the elements, the amazing phenomena attendant on his death, the sun clad in darkness, the appalling earthquake, the graves opening, the dead coming forth, the veil of the temple rent in twain, and his triumphant resurrection from the sepulchre in defiance of all the force and subtlety of man; the justifying perfection of his obedience on behalf of believers, the power of his grace on the mind, renewing and converting his most bitter enemies, and the triumphs of his gospel; these things prove him to have been the infinite, the almighty, the eternal, the co-equal Son of God.

I must draw this subject to a close. Let us all seek correct views of Christ Jesus. And especially let us seek to have right affections towards him. There are many false notions relative to the Son of God, and many opinions are held concerning him,

which are fatally dangerous. Millions and millions of mankind also, instead of loving him with all the heart, or above every thing else, are wholly indifferent to his infinite excellencies. "But if" the glories of Christ are "hid, they are hid to them that are lost. In whom the God of this world has blinded the minds of them who believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them."* Right sentiments concerning Christ are to be derived only from the Scriptures. The opinions of men are conflicting and endless; but the truth is simple and one. A true knowledge of the Lord Jesus is to be obtained from the Scripture taken as a whole, and not in detached portions, explained without attention to its expressions and import in other parts. And right affections towards Christ are to be gained by a truly devotional use of the means of his grace. His Spirit alone can sanctify our natures and enlighten our minds. And where his ordinances are observed in a sincere, humble, and dependent frame of mind, there the Spirit's influence will be found. These are the things that should excite our chief solicitude. Do they excite such solicitude in you? Are you saying, is it your fervent prayer, "Father of mercies, whatever thou withholdest from me, give me a knowledge of Christ?" Are you willing to part with your sins for Christ? Are you

* 2. Cor. iv. 3 & 4.

willing to deny yourselves for Christ and his salvation? to take up your cross and to follow him? You must be brought to count life itself not dear to you, compared with Jesus Christ, before you can be called real Christians. He deserves to be thus regarded: His worth is infinite. His blood, his fulness, his love, his presence, his blessing, are all infinite in value. If your eyes are opened to behold his glories gold and gems, riches and honours, ease and sinful pleasure will all sink in your view into comparative baseness and emptiness: Christ in your estimation will infinitely overbalance them all, and all that earth can afford. The good Lord incline us individually to lay these things to heart, for his mercy's sake.—Amen.

LECTURE X.



THE UNIVERSAL DOMINION OF CHRIST.

ACTS x. 36.

“He is Lord of all.”

IT is, I should imagine, generally allowed that these words can be applied to Him only who is Jehovah. But they are here applied fully and distinctly to Jesus Christ. The whole verse from which they are taken, is, “The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.” Jesus Christ then is Jehovah. The Greek word here translated “Lord”, does not necessarily imply essential Divinity. It is a word of extensive and various application. It is employed to designate any person in whom is vested property, authority, or right of any kind, thus denoting, for example, the head of a family, a husband, a parent, a master of servants, a teacher, a magistrate, a proprietor of any estate. It

is also used, both in the singular and plural, as a title of respect, like Sir and Sirs, in English, and in several parts of the New Testament it is so translated. Though when there is nothing in the connection that evidently limits it to some one or other of these inferior significations, it ordinarily, in the scriptural Greek, denotes the Supreme Being.* But about the term "Lord of all," there could, one would think, be no question. This can certainly belong to none but the Infinite and Eternal Supreme.

My object in the following discourse is to illustrate the text in a number of particulars founded on scripture testimony, and with their collective evidence, tending directly to show the justness of these words of the Apostle, and that in his short, but comprehensive proposition, he has embodied on the subject of the Redeemer's divine supremacy the general and unvarying sense of the word of God. Jesus Christ is Lord of all. How does this appear? He is the Author of Creation. He is the Head of the Church. He is the Governor of the world. He is the King of Heaven. He exercises uncontrollable Dominion over the Powers of darkness. He will fix at the last day, the eternal Destinies of angels and men.

In the *First* place, Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Author of Creation. This, revelation teaches us by full and decisive testimony. In the Gospel of John, the

* Dr. Smith's Scripture Testimony ;

first chapter and the third verse, the Evangelist declares that “all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” In the 10th verse of the same chapter, we read,—“He was in the world and the world was made by him. The Epistle to the Ephesians, the 3rd chapter and the 9th verse informs us, that God “created all things by Jesus Christ.” The Epistle to the Colossians, 1st chapter and the 16th verse, says,—“For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him and for him.” In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the 1st chapter and the 1st and 2nd verses, the Apostle’s language is—“God hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” Then in the 8th and 10th verses of the same chapter, this inspired writer adds, —“But unto the Son he saith,—And thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands.”

These passages, viewed together, shew us that the work of creation was produced by Christ, as its efficient cause, as a divine, immediate, almighty Agent. The texts of Scripture above quoted, need no comment to explain their meaning. They may be safely left to speak for themselves. Their meaning may be obscured, but it never can be made clearer than as

it appears in its own light. Either they mean that Christ gave being to the universe, or language was never more calculated to mislead its readers. But the word of inspiration is unerring and infallible. It not only has no tendency to mislead, but, if it be implicitly followed, it is sure to conduct us right. Our opponents may say that the passages I have just adduced are figurative and thus explain away their substantial import. But the assertion is preposterous and barefaced in the extreme. If the above quotations be figurative, then how are we at any time to know that the words of an author inspired or uninspired are to be understood literally? I may affirm, and, I think, without hesitation, that it will be impossible to tell. Omitting any remarks which might be made on the connection in which these passages stand, as shewing that their import is strictly literal, I would only ask, whether an author ever became so far figurative as to ascribe the creation of all things to a mere creature? Certainly no sacred penman ever so far forgot himself, whatever may have been the case with writers of a different class.

Behold then, ye followers of the Lamb, in your Lord and Master Jesus Christ, the Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. Out of nothing his power created all things. He gave existence to matter of every form and species. He gave being to angels of every rank, and made the soul of man: himself being uncreated and self-existent. How vast and ponderous is

the globe which we inhabit! It is his workmanship: its islands and seas, its rocks and mountains, its valleys and plains, its deserts and fertile regions, its oceans, continents, and hemispheres, its fruits and flowers, its trees and shrubs, its mineral productions, the fish that live in its waters, the fowl that fly in its atmosphere, and the endless race of other animals that move on its surface. How majestic and glorious! how vivifying and cheering the sun! how welcome and delightful the moon! and what can equal the sublimity and grandeur of a nocturnal sky illuminated and adorned with planets and stars! All this is the handy work of Christ. How mighty and august is the fabric of the universe! Our Jesus reared the whole. He gave forth his almighty fiat, and creation appeared in beauty consummate and grandeur unrivalled, boundless in extent to the view of men, but as nothing in his sight, and, compared with his infinity, less than nothing. To whatever part of creation then you turn your eyes, you may see the displays of Immanuel's wisdom, power, and goodness, and may contemplate the whole as his production. This is the light in which you should look at every object in creation from the greatest to the most minute. And especially you should sanctify your contemplation by some such reflections as these:—"O thou Almighty Redeemer! how marvellous was thy condescension, that when sin had marred thy works and brought a curse upon them, thou shouldst assume the nature of thy rebellious, fallen creatures, come into

the world which thou hadst made, content to be unknown to the world, or known only to be despised and rejected of men, and die for our sins to make a propitiation for our transgressions ! The wonders of thy creating power and goodness are absorbed in the greatness of thy redeeming love."

In the *Second* place, our Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church. The Apostle's words in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Colossians, and the 18th verse, are, " And he is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." In writing to the Ephesians also, the fourth chapter and the 15th verse, the same Apostle says, " But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the Head, even Christ. From whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." These words of the Apostle imply two things ;

1. That Christ is the Ruler of his Church ; and,
2. That he is the Source of vital influence and spiritual gifts to his Church.

1. Jesus Christ is the Ruler of his Church. It is founded on his authority. Its articles of faith are the doctrines of his word. Its rites and observances derive all their validity from his appointment.

He has enacted all its laws. Its officers derive their commission entirely from him. All its true members are his spiritual subjects. Its ordinances are administered in his name and with a view to his glory, and he presides in all its assemblies. The church of Christ has no legislative ruler but one, and that is himself. He is the only spiritual Lord in this sacred community. "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

The Apostles themselves were not lords over God's heritage, but "the servants of the Church for Jesus' sake."* In ecclesiastical establishments, which human policy has framed, at least in that of our own country, bishops are termed, "lords spiritual," but we find nothing of this description in the New Testament. We have, on the contrary, reason to believe that the Apostles, after they were instructed in the true nature of Christ's kingdom, would have shrunk with dread from such a designation.

Whoever rules in the church of the Lord Jesus in any other way than executively, duly and faithfully administering his ordinances, and acting according to his appointment and direction, boldly encroaches on the prerogatives of the Son of God. They who make laws for the church, order and impose rites of discipline, and require subscription to articles of belief drawn up by fallible men, put themselves in the place

* Matt. xxiii. 8.—2 Cor. iv. 5.

of Christ, and trample on his authority. He is the adorable and exclusive Lawgiver of the Christian church, qualified alike by his infinite wisdom, his supreme dignity, his efficacious and omnipresent grace, his unequalled love, his divine power, his unchanging rectitude, and his eternal truth.

The New Testament is the only canon law of Zion, the only rule both of faith and worship which Jesus ever sanctioned or ever approved. It was suited to the state of the church in the primitive age; and it is equally adapted to her condition in every vicissitude and period of time to the end of the world. "Go," said the risen Redeemer to his Apostles, "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things which I have commanded you; and lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

2. The passages placed at the head of this division of the subject, imply that Christ is the source of vital influence and spiritual gifts to his people. In this important and interesting view he is the Head of the church. He is not merely the origin of authority; he is also the origin of life, and moral power, and all active energy. "He gave some apostles, some prophets, and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of ministry."* He

* Matt. xxviii. 19 & 20.—Eph. iv. 11.

gives "eternal life to as many as the Father has given him."* Every communication of holy gifts and saving grace comes from his mediatorial fulness. He imparts fortitude and constancy to martyrs to enable them not only to suffer, but to die for the truth. He supplies missionaries with courage, resolution, prudence, enterprise, patience, and unquenchable zeal to bear them through their arduous, responsible, and honourable, but self-denying, undertaking. He furnishes pastors with knowledge, fidelity, and affection; with earnestness, discretion, humility, and meekness. He gives light and holiness, unity and strength, peace, prosperity, and joy to the churches. He enriches the hearts of his people with faith and love, hope, comfort, and heavenly-mindedness. He enables the Christian to gain the victory over sin. He is with his followers in trouble, endows them with resignation and fortitude, and even inspires them with unspeakable joy. He defends the believer when assailed by temptation. He reclaims to himself and his ways the backslider. He upholds the weak. He confirms the wavering. He encourages and emboldens the timid, revives the drooping and the disconsolate, and raises the hopes of the fearful. He guides the young. He supports the aged. He sympathizes with the afflicted and affords aid to the dying. He attends his people in and through the dark valley of the shadow of death, and

* John xvii. 2.

brings them all to his holy mountain, his glorious dwelling place in heaven.

These things our Lord Jesus is doing for his church continually, and from age to age proving himself the almighty, all-wise, omniscient, omnipresent, and never-dying Saviour. He dwells in the souls of all his saints by his all-animating influence. He fills the places where his name is recorded with his grace. He gives success to his word, and makes it "quick and powerful." He blesses "the provisions of his house and satisfies his poor with bread." He "clothes his ministers with salvation and causes his people to shout aloud for joy." The united testimony of all that ever have composed or ever will compose his church on earth is: "out of his fulness have all we received and grace for grace."*

Blessed, for ever blessed be God, for Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church. He is a divine, infallible, and ever-living Head. He is worthy of this character; for he is every way competent to accomplish the infinitely momentous objects which induced him to assume it. The treasures of his grace are unsearchable and exhaustless. When the exigencies of his people of every age and clime are supplied, his riches will be still undiminished. His wisdom is such that no creature can fathom its depths. He is more than equal to any and every extremity to which the church may be

* Heb. iv. 12.—Psalm cxxxii. 15 & 16.—John i. 16.

reduced in this world. He is mightier than all our foes. He is ever near to help and afford suitable counsel. His presence may always be enjoyed not only by his followers collectively, but by every individual disciple. Looking to him we are sure of his assistance, and his blessing is never withheld. Let him *alone* then be acknowledged as the Head of his body, the church, let no one be associated with him in this dignity. Let his name be for ever adored, his will revered, his pleasure consulted, and his honour be the chief end of our existence.

In the *Third* place, Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is the Governor of the world. In the 97th Psalm and the 1st verse, the Psalmist says, "The Lord reigneth: let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of isles be glad." In the 99th Psalm, the 1st and 2nd verses, he says again, "The Lord reigneth; let the people tremble: he sitteth between the cherubim; let the earth be moved. The Lord is great in Zion, and he is high above all people." In the 103rd Psalm and the 19th verse, we read, "The Lord has prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. Now compare these verses with the Redeemer's own words in the 17th of John and the 2nd verse: "Thou hast given him," that is his Son, "power over all flesh," in other words, dominion over the whole human race, the government of the world.

Jesus presides over the administration of all human affairs. The economy of Providence is in his hands.

He sits at the helm of earth's concerns. He superintends, directs, and manages the whole drama of terrestrial transactions and events. What is good proceeds from himself; it is the result of his own positive, gracious, effectual influence on the minds and over the conduct of his creatures. What is evil he not only foresees and knows, but he is pleased to permit, only so far however as in infinite wisdom and goodness he sees proper, and then overruling it for his own glory, he stops its further progress. "The wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of that wrath he will restrain."

The Lord Jesus is, "King of kings and Lord of lords." This is the honourable and distinguished title he bears, and by which it is his will to be known as the Sovereign of the nations. The grandees of the earth, its emperors and kings, whether they know it or not, and whether or not they acknowledge it, are his servants. "He removeth kings and setteth up kings." "Promotion," regal promotion, "cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south,"* but from the will and pleasure of Christ. It is under his auspices that empires rise, and when he appoints they fall. He presides in the counsels of cabinets, and their measures prosper or their deliberations are unavailing as he is pleased to smile upon them or to withhold his approbation. When states are rent to

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.—1 Tim. vi. 15.—Daniel ii. 21.—Psalm lxxv. 6.

pieces by internal convulsions, it is by his sovereign permission. When kingdoms are overrun with invading armies, it is to accomplish the purposes of his indignation in the punishment of their sins, or the designs of his mercy in removing obstructions to the progress of his truth, and thus making a way for the wide extension of his own kingdom, the kingdom of purity and love. When nations flourish and continue peaceful and happy, and especially if the gospel extend its influence among them, without which all earthly prosperity is of small moment, it is because Christ is favourable to them. When war carries desolation through a land, or pestilence destroys its thousands, or famine its tens of thousands, it is because the Lord, the exalted Saviour, has a controversy either with the inhabitants or its rulers, or perhaps with both, for their crying sins, or their opposition to his gospel, or their abuse of his word, or their indifference to his truth and misimprovement of their privileges.

It is owing to the mediatorial government of the Redeemer over all the earth, that the world is preserved in existence; that ignorance, superstition, idolatry, infidelity, crime, oppression, cruelty, and murder, do not fill every place where human beings are found, and soon make mankind the means of their own extinction; that there is always a generation to follow the preceding, and another generation rising up to succeed the present. Such is the wickedness of the human heart, that were it not restrained by a superior power,

even where the mind itself is not sanctified, were it in all cases permitted to operate without restraint, there is, I think, the most substantial reason to conclude, that society would give place to barbarism, that civil government would tumble into anarchy, that the ties of consanguinity and blood would be broken asunder, that natural affection would be extinguished amidst domestic feuds and broils, and that man would corrupt, envy, defraud, oppress, and destroy, first his fellow-man, and then himself, till the species was completely exterminated.

But especially do we owe it to the reign of Jesus as Mediator, that there are among us wise and salutary laws; that there are impartial tribunals where right may be vindicated, injustice punished, and violence and bloodshed receive their appropriate condemnation; that the relations of life are held sacred, and the rights of friendship and hospitality are respected and observed.

And still more especially do we owe it to the universal government of Jesus Christ over mankind, that the gospel is known in various parts of the earth; that the Holy Scriptures are circulating round the globe; that religion is gaining a more extensive influence; that God has a seed to serve him, a righteous generation to call him blessed; that there is always a holy remnant, greater or smaller, to shew forth his praise; that the visible church is continued from age to age; and that in our day her missionaries are in every

quarter of the globe, and converts are flocking to her embrace from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south ; and, in a word, that the children of Zion, as with one general impulse, are rejoicing in the hope, that the day is near at hand, when it shall be said, “ The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.” How just, then, are the sentiments, and how correct the feelings of the Poet expressed in these beautiful stanzas !

“ Say to the nations, Jesus reigns,
“ God’s own Almighty Son,
“ His power the sinking world sustains,
“ And grace surrounds his throne.

“ Let Heaven proclaim the joyful day,
“ Joy through the earth be seen,
“ Let cities shine in bright array,
“ And fields in cheerful green,

“ Behold ! he comes ! he comes to bless
“ The nations as their God,
“ To shew the world his righteousness,
“ And send his truth abroad.”

The most interesting view of this part of the subject I have not yet distinctly pointed out, and I have scarcely left myself time for it. It is, that Christ is the Governor of the world, *for the church* ; that is, for her protection, safety, future triumph, and eternal glory. “ God gave him,” says the Apostle, “ to be the Head over all things to the church.” The salvation of believers is entrusted to Immanuel ; and, in order

that he may have every facility and every means of facility for carrying it into full effect, the government of the world is put into his hands. To this object, every thing, therefore, that transpires among men has a more remote or immediate reference. All things unite in subservience to it. All things combine to hasten its accomplishment. The interests of Zion, general and particular, not those of the humblest believers excepted, are consulted alike in the decrees of monarchs, in the enactments of states, in the formation of treaties, in the happiness of kingdoms, in the overthrow of dynasties, in the success of armies, in the failure of campaigns, in the vicissitudes of commerce, in fruitful seasons, in times of scarcity and want, in the fluctuation of wealth, in the progress of disease, in the rearing of families, in the breaking up of households, and all in the changing scenes of social and private life. Let every thing, my Christian friends, that happens around you in the state of the nations, or in your own individual circumstances, be viewed in this light, and you will find in the consideration a wonderful efficacy to calm your fears, to moderate your anxieties, to animate your hopes, and to fill you with peace and joyful expectation.

In the *Fourth* place, Jesus Christ is the King of Heaven. In writing to the Ephesians, the Apostle says, in the 1st chapter from the 20th verse, that “he (the Father of glory) raised him (Christ) from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the

heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." The Apostle Peter in the third chapter of his first Epistle and the 22nd verse, tells us, that "Jesus Christ is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." You know also that heaven is called, "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and that he himself, is called, "The Lord of glory."* In the 24th Psalm, a Psalm considered by almost all commentators as predicting the event of his ascension, he is called, "The King of glory." The verses to which I allude are from the 7th to the close: "Lift up your heads, O ye gates! and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty. The Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates! even lift them up, ye everlasting doors, and the King of glory shall come in. Who is the King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory."

Jesus Christ reigns in heaven with undisputed sway. His authority is acknowledged there, and none refuse him homage. Every inhabitant of the celestial world bows at his name in submission, adoration, and

* 2 Peter i. 11.—James ii. 1.

love. He sits enthroned in the affections of every angel and every glorified spirit. They own his supremacy. They delight to yield him unremitting and perfect obedience. It is their heaven to see his face, to enjoy his smile, to gaze on his eternal beauties, to celebrate and adore his unnumbered excellencies, to follow in his train, and to live under his wise and holy, his happy and glorious administration. As King of heaven he appears in uncreated majesty. His attendants are all the holy and happy intelligences in the world above. His love and munificence are equal to his glory. His reign will never end. His sceptre cannot be broken. His throne cannot be overturned. His dominion can never be invaded. His empire can never wax old or decay. His kingdom is imperishable. His subjects will never die. His nature is incorruptible, and his existence and power are commensurate with eternity.

As King of glory, our Lord Jesus admits to the possession of it all his faithful followers, and for ever excludes from it those who are ashamed of his name, indifferent to the salvation which he bestows, or enslaved by the love of sin. "He opens and no man shuts. He shuts and no man opens."* He will give the crown of righteousness to all them who love his appearing. He disposes of every seat in heaven. How

* Rev. iii. 7.

desirable then, how supremely desirable, that I should gain his favour ! that I should be one of those whom he has promised to own and has engaged never to disown ! that I should be like him, renewed by his Spirit, accepted in him, and resolved, in dependence on his grace, to serve him and imitate him to the end of life !

In the *Fifth* place, The divine Redeemer exercises uncontrollable dominion over the powers of darkness. He has bruised the serpent's head, he has destroyed the works of the devil, he has conquered death, he has triumphed over the grave, and he has vanquished hell ; Satan and the infernal legions are all bound in his chains. Neither the Prince of darkness, nor any one of his diabolical agents, can move without the Redeemer's permission. "He has spoiled principalities and powers,"* spoiled the principalities and powers of hell, confounded their projects, dispossessed them of their prey, made their power subservient to his own, and led them in eternal captivity.

Let no one, from a dread of the power of Satan and the malice of infernal spirits, fear to enter on the spiritual warfare ; I mean the humble, holy, self-denying life of a real Christian. Go in the strength and guidance of Jesus, and you will always be safe. No hellish foe will be able either to seduce you by craft, or to destroy you by force and power.

* Col. ii. 15.

“Hell and your sins resist your course ;
“ But hell and sin are vanquish'd foes ;
“ Your Jesus nail'd them to his cross,
“ And sung the triumph when he rose.
“ What, though the prince of darkness rage,
“ And waste the fury of his spite,
“ Eternal chains confine him down
“ To fi'ry deeps and endless night.”

Satan can never ruin the soul that leans on the Saviour. That soul is as sure of victory as it is certain that Christ has triumphed.

In the *Sixth* place, The Son of God will fix at the last day the eternal destinies of angels and men. He will “judge the world in righteousness.” “We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

Here we see clearly that Christ is God, as none can, in the nature of things, be equal to the functions of final and universal judgment but a Divine person. The prerogative of final and universal judgment, supposes on the part of the judge a perfect knowledge of the events of every age, the annals of every nation, the history of every family, the life of every individual, and the secrets of every heart ; a perfect knowledge of the circumstances, the obligations, the actions, the words, and the thoughts of every

* Psalm xi. 8.—2 Cor. v. 10.

moral agent that will have existed in the universe, from the creation to the end of time. This knowledge is infinite, and can be possessed by infinity alone. But as Christ is to judge the world, he possesses this knowledge. Then Christ is infinite; or, in other words, he is Jehovah.

But some may, perhaps, be ready to produce, as forming an objection to what I have here advanced, the words of the Redeemer: Mark xiii. 32. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." In answer to such an objection, I shall reply, that it would be very easy to shew from other Scriptures, that Christ knows perfectly both the day and the hour when the final judgment shall commence. He says, "all things that the Father hath are mine." Then the knowledge of the Father is his. The Apostle Peter said to the Redeemer, "Lord, thou knowest all things,"* and the Saviour offered no contradiction to the Apostle. But he doubtless would have contradicted him, either directly or indirectly, had not his words been strictly and fully true. Farther, it is abundantly evident from various parts of the sacred writings, that Christ is omniscient. But if he is omniscient, then he knows from eternity the very day and hour of the final judgment. The Greek word, which in the

* John xvi. 15.—xxi. 17.

passage in question is translated, "to know," sometimes signifies to *make known*. It has this meaning, 1 Cor. ii. 2. where the Apostle says, "I determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." I determined to *make known* nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified, is evidently the import of his resolution. And it is the opinion of some of the ablest Biblical critics, that the word (it is the same word in both instances) should be so translated in the passage under consideration. The Son did not *make known* the day nor the hour of the last judgment. This we know was the fact. Christ only predicted the event, he never foretold the exact time when it would take place, nor will it ever be foretold. That is not the subject of prophesy any where. The precise, exact period when the judgment will be, is among the times and seasons which the Father has put in his own power, and it never will be known or revealed, till, in the course of his providence, it actually arrives. The meaning, then, according to matter of fact and other parts of Scripture is, that the Lord Jesus did not make known that day and that hour.*

* The author submits this view of the above-mentioned passage in the gospel of Mark, in deference to the judgment and opinion of learned and highly respectable authorities who explain it in a different manner. Archbishop Tillotson, Dr. Calamy, and others consider the day and hour of the last judgment as unknown to Christ in his human understanding. Christ is God and man.

We have now seen that our Lord Jesus is the Author of creation, the Head of the church, the Governor of the world, the King of heaven ; that he exercises uncontrollable dominion over the powers of darkness, and that he will fix the final and endless destinies of angels and men. Surely then, it may be emphatically said, "he is Lord of all."

In conclusion, I ask, is he your Lord, my hearers ? He certainly has a sovereign claim upon you and an unalienable right to you ; but is he yours by your own choice ? have you humbly, but joyfully, embraced him as offered to you in the gospel ? and have you solemnly,

The Scriptures therefore not only ascribe to him whatever is essential to Deity, but they also affirm of him every thing that is peculiar to humanity, with the sole exception of sin. Christ is God, according to the Scriptures ; therefore he has infinite wisdom. Christ is man, according to the Scriptures ; therefore he possesses a human understanding. But the human understanding is limited in its powers and circumscribed in its exercise. Futurity must be wholly unknown, except the knowledge of it be communicated by Deity in some supernatural way. This is as true in application to the human understanding of Christ, as it is in reference to that of an ordinary man ; for we are told, "he increased in wisdom and stature." It follows, therefore, necessarily, that while the exact time of the final judgment could not but be clearly and distinctly known from eternity to the Divine omniscience of Christ ; to his human understanding, except shewn to him by supernatural Revelation, it must be perfectly unknown. Perhaps this explanation is preferable to that which is suggested by the Hiphil form of the verb, adopted in Dr. Macknight's translation, and given in this Lecture. The reader is left to choose for himself. Either of them is, however, I think unspeakably more natural and easy than that hypothesis, which, while it admits that Christ will judge the world, yet denies that he possesses infinite wisdom, and, consequently, eternal power and Godhead.

but cheerfully, dedicated yourselves to him? Is it your wish and supreme desire, that he should reign both in you and over you? Other lords have had dominion over you; but is it so no more? Have you renounced their dominion at once and for ever? And have you now no Lord and Master but Jesus Christ? If he is Lord of all, it must be an awful thing to be among his enemies. Dreadful will be the lot of all who do not become reconciled to him as their God and Saviour. But glorious will be the portion of his friends. Nothing can keep you from becoming willingly subject to the Son of God and enjoying his friendship, but the most criminal and infatuated indifference to your everlasting welfare. Do you want purity?—He has it to bestow. Do you want pardon?—It may be had of him. Do you want life? There is eternal life in him. Do you want happiness? He can give you happiness, pure, perfect, and without end. Come then to him and trust him, come now and trust him eternally. If ye are not the loyal subjects of Jesus, you are the vassals of sin, the slaves of the world, the drudges of Satan. But “if the Son make you free you shall be free indeed.”* If you already follow in his train—honour his name by your confidence, adorn his truth by your consistency, and triumph in the prospect of living and reigning

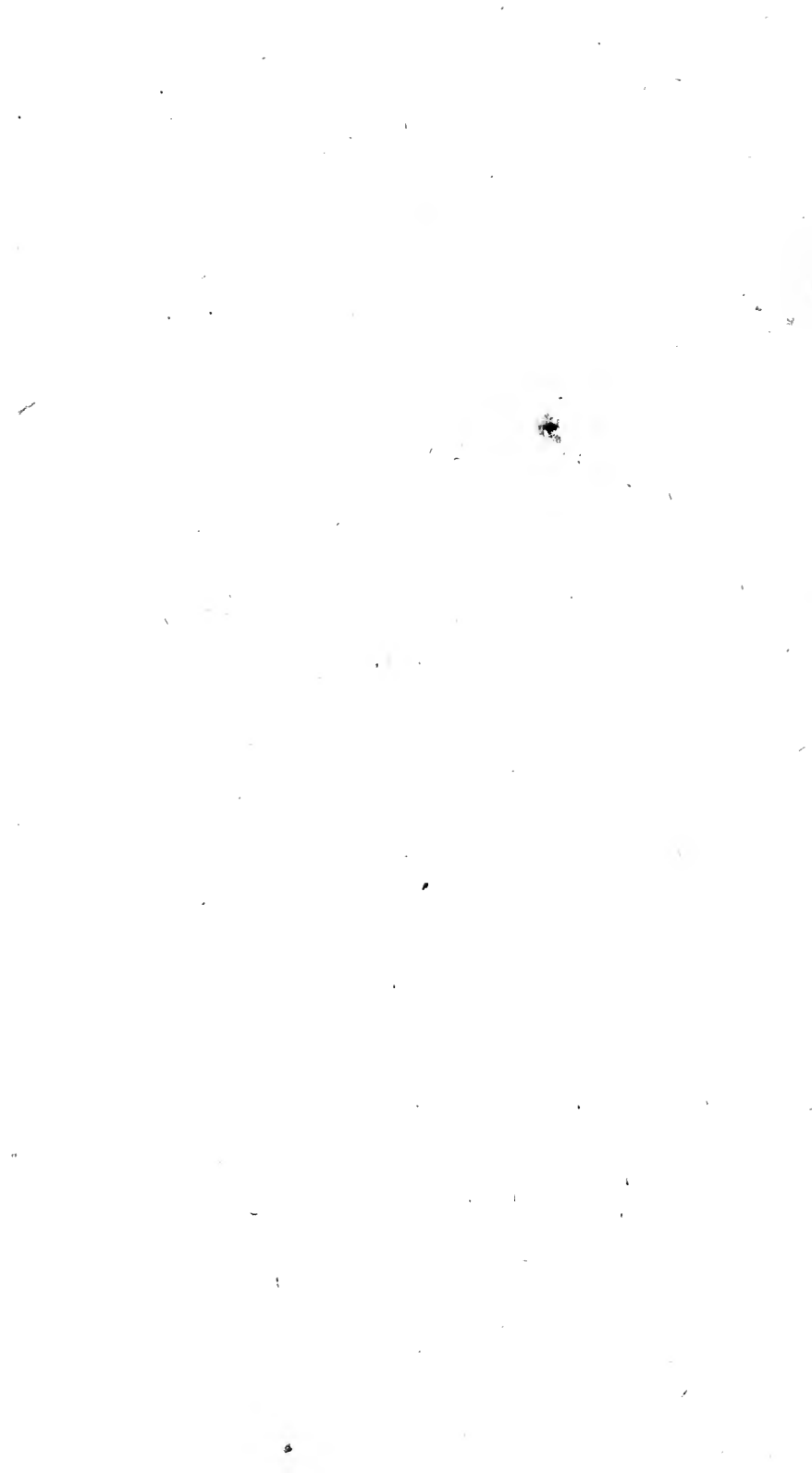
* John viii. 36.

with him in glory for ever. He is "Lord of all." Every enemy must eventually submit and bow to him, and his friends are sure to rise with him to unfading glory and renown. May you and I be among those who shall grace his final triumphs, and who shall celebrate in never ending hallelujahs his universal and everlasting reign !

F I N I S.

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